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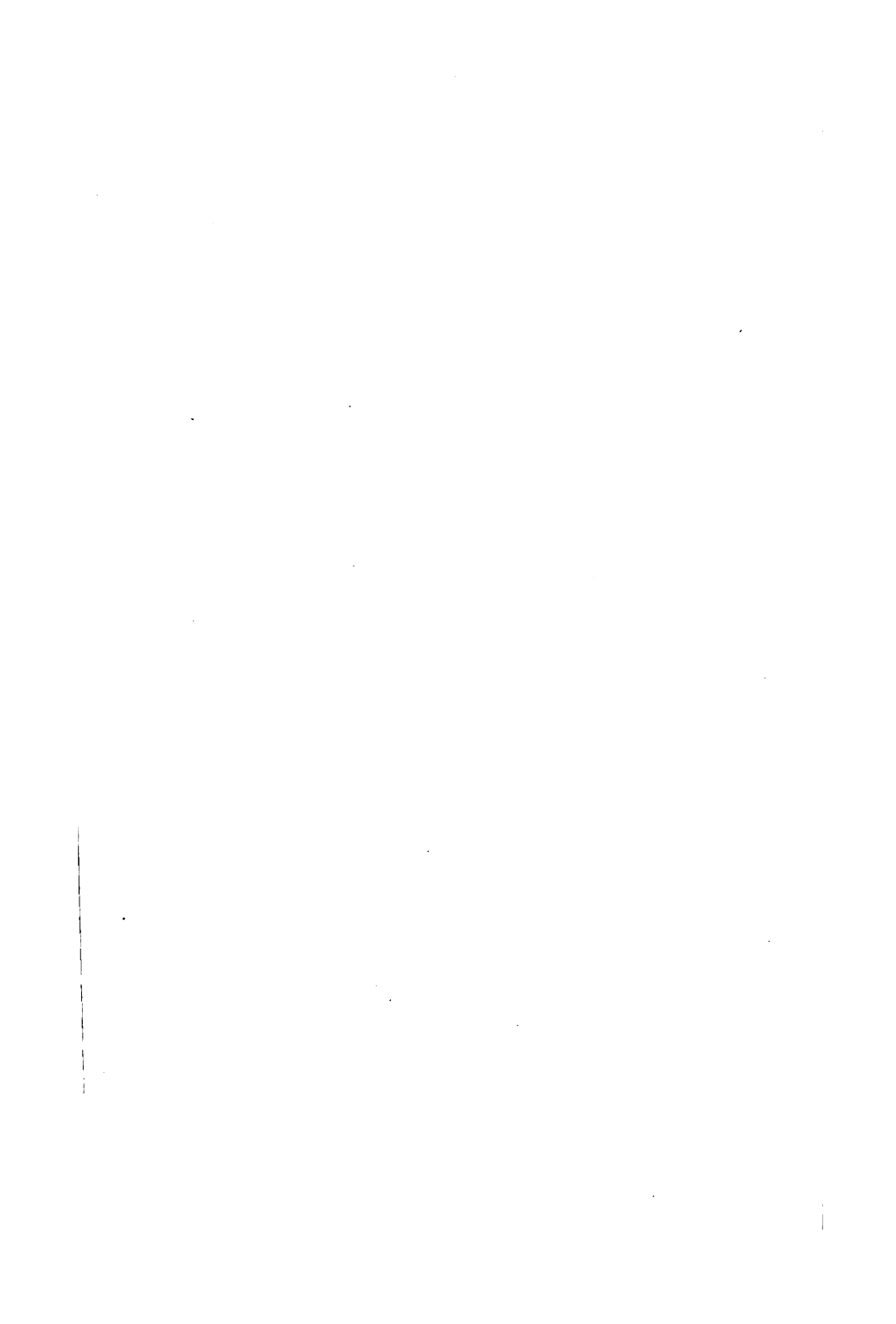
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*HARRY
JOSCELYN*





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HARRY JOSCELYN.

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VOL. I.

HARRY JOSCELYN.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

"The Chronicles of Carlingford,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HARRY JOSCELYN.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

“**M**OTHER, I wish you would not make such a fuss. It is only Harry quarrelling with father; I am sure you ought to be used to that by this time. It is just as sure to happen when they get together as that night will come after day.”

“I never can be used to it if I should live a hundred years,” said the mother thus addressed. She was walking up and down a long low room, wringing her hands as she walked, her brow contracted with anxiety and alarm. Her daughter sat tranquilly knitting, following her with eyes full of calm disapproval as her figure crossed the glow of the firelight, and went and came into

the gloom on either side. The 'occasional sound of their low voices, the faint rustle of the elder woman's movements, the crackle of the fire burning brightly, with now and then a small explosion and sudden blaze, were all the sounds that broke the quiet here; and this made all the more apparent a growl of deep-voiced talk in an adjoining room, with now and then a high word, almost audible, quite comprehensible in its excited tone. Father and son were in the dining-room, mother and daughter were in the parlour, a pleasant division one might have thought. Outside the wind was blowing down the valley with a force which might have suggested storm in other localities, but was natural and ordinary here. It was April, but scarcely spring as yet in the north country. "As the day lengthens the cold strengthens," is the rule under the Shap Fells. Joan Joscelyn, the elder daughter of the house, was seated near the fire with her knitting. She was quite still save for the twinkle of her knitting needles, which caught the firelight, and her eyes, with which she watched her mother without turning her head. Her shadow upon the drawn curtains behind her was as still as though cut out of

paper. She was not very young nor had she any traces of beauty in the somewhat worn and very fixed and steady lines of her face. Her dark hair was very smooth, her dress very neat, everything about her orderly and calm. A slight look of restrained impatience in her eyes, impatience mingled with disapproval, and that sort of faint contempt which children so often feel for their parents, was the only sign which the calm daughter of a nervous mother gave of her feelings. "I wish you would not make such a fuss, you ought to be used to it by this time," was written all over her, and perhaps there was in her aspect something of that conscientious superiority felt by Mrs. Hardcastle in the play when she said, "See me, how calm I am;" but all subdued by the natural spectatorship of her position. What could *she* do one way or another? Then why should she excite herself for nothing? This was Joan's sensible conclusion—and why her mother could not adopt it too was a thing she could not understand.

Mrs. Joscelyn was a pale woman of a very different aspect. She was, people thought at the first glance, not so old as her daughter, notwithstanding the advantage which a calm tempera-

ment is supposed to have over an excitable one. But it is not always true that the sensitive and self-tormenting grow old sooner than their more tranquil companions. Joan had never been young at all, so to speak. Her mother was young still in the freshness of a mind which would not be controlled by experience, which trusted every new promise and embraced every new hope, and was as bitterly disappointed by every failure of her hopes as if she had never known a disappointment before. How many pangs this temperament brought to her it would be impossible to reckon; but it kept a sentiment of youth about her, a sense of living such as her daughter in her best days never knew. Both of them however agreed in believing that this temperament was a curse and not a blessing; the daughter with heartfelt astonishment at the power which her mother possessed of tormenting herself—if indeed it were not a fictitious torture which she rather liked than otherwise, as Joan sometimes imagined with instinctive contempt; while the mother as often sighed, Oh, that she could take things as quietly, give up making a fuss, bear her troubles with the same calm as Joan. But neither could the one bring herself to the level of the other,

nor either understand the different conditions which made similar action impossible. Joan for her part followed Mrs. Joscelyn's restless movements with a wonder which she could never get over. What good could it do? Why couldn't she sit down and get her work, and occupy herself? Even, Joan thought, it would be better to get a book and read (though that was a waste of time) and "take her mind off," the thing that so troubled her. "Of course it was a pity that father and Harry should quarrel; but then, bless me," Joan said to herself, "boys so often quarrel with their fathers. Why should there be more fuss made about it here than anywhere else?" She was knitting a long worsted stocking which hung down from her hands like a big grey bag; now and then she gave it a momentary look, to see that the ribs were right and the "seam" kept straight; but for the most part did not look at it at all, but watched her mother while the needles twinkled in the firelight and the big stocking leg turned round in her hands with an occasional jerk.

Meanwhile Mrs. Joscelyn walked up and down wringing her hands. The room was not very light. There were two candles on the

table; but it was the brilliant glow of the fire which lit up the space in front, throwing a ruddy reflection even into the darkness of the corners. She paced all the length of the room, crossing periodically the bar of brighter light. She was rather tall, but stooped, her shoulders coming together with the ceaseless movement of her hands. Harry had put his hand into hers and vowed to her that he would avoid all subjects of quarrel, that he would give to his father the soft answer that turns away wrath. But, alas! he must have broken his word. It was not the first time nor the thirtieth time; but she felt astonished and disappointed as if up to that moment all promises had been kept to her. She was one who could not get used to suffering. It was as intolerable to her after so many years of it, so many pangs, as if she had lived the life of a spoilt child up to that moment and never known what contradiction was. The sound of the voices in the next room seemed to pierce into her heart. When they rose louder than usual she would give a low cry. Sometimes she stood still for a moment to hear the better, sometimes she spoke half to Joan, half to herself.

"I think I must go in—I must go in, I can't

let them go on like this. What if they were to lift their hands to each other, father and son, oh! father and son," and then she made a sudden impulsive step towards the door; but paused again with a convulsive pressure together of her worn hands.

"Let them alone mother," said Joan, "what good could you do? Only turn both of them upon yourself."

"I know, I know," moaned the poor lady. Then she stopped in the middle of the light. "Oh!" she said, raising her arms with a gesture which would have been theatrical had it not been so real, "oh! what have I done, what have I done that I can never have peace in my house?"

Joan never took her eyes from this moving figure, but the long grey stocking jerked and turned round in her hands, and the needles twinkled without intermission.

"You expect too much," she said; "bless me! there's quarrels in all houses, and lads go wrong, and all sorts of things happen. Girls too, which is worse. We should be thankful nothing of that kind has happened to us. If Will and Tom have been a little wild in their time

they've settled down; and I've always behaved myself. You have a deal to be thankful for, mother. As for sons at home when the father is a hale man like father, they're always quarrelling. What young fellows want is their own way. Father's too young to manage Harry, he's too strong and likely, just as good a man as any of them. That's my opinion; so are you a deal too young. Bless me, you're not a bit older than I am. If I wasn't so steady I shouldn't like it, I'd rather have an old wife that would give in to me and admire me, whatever I did—"

Joan continued the monologue with a little curve at one corner of her mouth which did duty for a smile. It was not much more than a soliloquy, if truth were told. She knew very well her mother was not listening and did not hear her. Mrs. Joscelyn had re-commenced the walk with which she was trying to subdue her restlessness. And now the voices grew louder than ever. There was a long volley of sounds, in the deepest tone, a sort of discharge of musketry, vituperation rounded off with a large mouth-filling oath or two; then a louder noise like the pushing back of chairs, one of which

was thrown down with a heavy crash on the floor. Even Joan started at this noise, and her mother rushed trembling to the door. But before she could open it the door of the next room was thrown violently against the wall, and some one plunged out, rushing across the hall and flinging forth at the outer door. Another volley from the deep voice accompanied this hasty retreat. The mother turned, and hurrying across the room to the window, disappeared behind the drawn curtain that covered it. She opened the shutter as softly and quickly as her trembling would permit, and looking out watched the owner of the hasty steps disappearing, with a clang of the garden gate, in the faint wintry moonlight, which made the landscape beyond look like a white mist. She stood and watched him, shaking her head with a low moan.

“Now he is away to the village,” she said piteously, “oh, my poor lad! the ‘Red Lion,’ that’s all the fireside my Harry will get. Oh, good Lord, good Lord! and me here breaking my heart; and neither sleep nor rest will I get this night till I hear my boy come home. But it is not his fault, it’s not his fault; and what

is to be the end of it?" the poor lady cried.

Joan, though she was so tranquil, was not unsympathetic. She made a little remonstrative sound with her tongue in unison with the clicking of her needles.

"Bless me! dear me! but he'll take no harm at the 'Red Lion;' don't always be thinking the worst, and making things out more dreadful than they are," she said.

Mrs. Joscelyn emerged from the heavy dark-hued curtains with a sigh, but yet there was a certain softening in her face. Her anxiety was changed, at least, if not relieved. She came and stood in front of the fire, holding up a thin shapely foot to the red glow.

"I am so cold," she said, with a nervous shiver.

"That's because you will fret so, mother, and make such a deal of everything," Joan said.

Mrs. Joscelyn made no answer to this reproach.

"My feet are like lumps of lead," she said.
"It's more like December than April. I think I will never be warm again."

A little sympathetic moisture softened Joan's steady eyes. She felt towards her mother as she might have felt to a tiresome but amiable

child, impatient of her vagaries, yet sorry for the useless trouble and pain the poor thing gave herself.

"It's all the fretting," she said, "it's not the weather. Sit down here by the fire and I'll get you a shawl. Bless me! there's father coming in."

Mrs. Joscelyn retreated hastily from the fire-side, and sat down by the table, where the candles were shining steadily upon a heap of linen to mend. She took up something hurriedly without appearing to notice what it was, and began to work, or to put on an appearance of working. It seemed at first a false alarm, but, after a minute or two of uncertain movement outside, the door opened and a tall and strong man came in. There was a great arm-chair standing by the side of the fire, which evidently, as soon as he appeared, proclaimed itself to be waiting for him, his harsh and big domestic throne; a hard, broad, uncompromising piece of furniture, with its two great wooden elbows thrust out. He stood for a moment at the door, looking round the room—perhaps to see whether his son had taken refuge there, perhaps only to find out any lurking offence. Ralph Joscelyn was a man

whose habit it was to look out for offence meant or possible. He inspected the downcast faces of the women, for even Joan now, after one momentary glance at him, turned her eyes upon her knitting—and the bright space before the fire, and all the darker corners round. Then his keen eye caught the ruffled curtain, and the slight whiteness behind of the moonlight showing through the shutter, which his wife had left half open. She had meant to go back when the rest of the house was quiet, and watch noiseless at that window till her son came back, and probably her husband divined this. He walked straight to the window, pushing the curtains aside, and with much demonstration closed the shutters, and with a heavy tug brought the curtains together again.

“There’s no order in this house, nor ever was,” he said, in a strong North country accent. Then he crossed the room again and threw himself into the big chair. The house was solidly built, and the parlour was on the ground floor; nevertheless, his step made the floor jar and creak as if it had found loose boards under the carpet, and shook the room as though it had been in a slim villa. The big chair creaked too as

he threw himself into it. All other sounds had ceased as by magic, even the click of Joan's needles, which only occurred at long intervals, though she worked on with more devotion than ever. Even the coals made no further explosions, sent out no little gay jets of gas, but burned soberly, stolidly under the master's eye. Mrs. Joscelyn, in her agitation, was less silent. Her elbow knocked against the table, her needle stumbled and broke in her work, her reels of thread fell down and rolled about the carpet. All this the master contemplated with his keen spectator-eyes. He had altogether changed the character of the scene. The two very distinctly marked individuals, so unlike in nature, though so closely bound together, who had put forth unawares each her own phase of life in the household quiet, were now cowed into a sort of composed and alarmed opposition, dumbly resistant, making common cause together; typical women merely, not individuals at all. The typical domestic tyrant who had worked this change looked round him with a glance in which contempt for them and a kind of pleasure in their subjugation were mingled with resentment against them for the distrust and sudden silence which

he knew his appearance had produced. He crossed his long legs half way across the hearth, thrusting up his heavy boot almost in his daughter's face. Many men do this who mean no particular harm, but Joscelyn did mean harm, and did not care who knew it. In a moment the room had become full of him, and of his oppressive shadow. He took away and devoured, drawing into his capacious gullet, the very air they breathed.

"You are a nice cheerful lot for a man to come in to," he said; "a nice pleasant home you make for me, with that click-clack. I don't wonder, not I, that men turn out to the ale-house, though I've got to punish 'em for it now and again. No, I don't wonder, not a bit. A couple of white-faced women filling up his rooms, taking the heat out of his fire and the light out of his lamp for their confounded stockings and rubbish—when there isn't an old woman in the dale but could do them a sight better and save all that pretence."

Joan upon this raised her eyes. She was not timid, though she avoided strife.

"You don't mind, then, about the light and the fire of other men," she said, "if we were to

give your stockings to other women to knit for you. But you're none so fond of spending your money even for the yarn, let alone the knitting. You're a heavy man upon your feet, and wear out a deal of heels and toes. Some one's bound to knit them for you. If you like better to pay, I don't mind, you may make sure of that."

"You!" cried her father, "a piece of stale goods that can't find a market; who cares for you? You should have been the plague of some other house these ten years, and not sucking the life out of mine, and setting up your face before your betters. *She* don't make any observations; and whatever else she is, she's my wife, and has some right to speak."

Joan's brown eyes gave out a flash. She was no longer cowed.

"I have had a good lesson," she said. "I can see how nice it is to be your wife, father, and I don't want to try it on my own account."

"Oh, hush! hush! Joan," the mother said, her hands coming together once more.

"*You* don't want to try!" said Joscelyn. "Who's given you a chance? that's what I'd like to know. If I had my own way I'd clear you all out of this house. I'd have no useless

women here. When a man gets sense he knows what a fool he's been, burdening himself with a wife and children—a wife that gets old and ugly, and a set of children that defy him under his own roof. Good Lord! think of me, a man in my prime, with a middle-aged woman like that saying father to me! when I might have had my fling, and been a gay young fellow with the best of them. There's your son too, madam, just gone out of here shaking his fist in my face; and if I knock him down there will be a great hulabooloo got up because he's my son. Son! what's a son? or daughter either? A rebellious scamp that will neither do anything for himself nor do what you tell him to do. By the Lord Harry! when I think what a snug comfortable life I might have been living here with nothing to trouble me. And now I can't stretch my legs under my own mahogany but there's a brat of a boy to contradict me, or come into my own parlour but there's a brat of a girl—— no, by Jove no," he added, with a coarse laugh, "there I'm going too far; not a girl, or anything like it—an old maid. That's what a man makes by marrying young, like a fool, as I was."

While he thus discharged his volleys on both

sides, the women relapsed into absolute silence. Mrs. Joscelyn was too much afraid to interfere, while Joan shrugged her shoulders, with the philosophy that was natural to her. What does it matter to me what he says? she said to herself; I didn't choose him for a father, and she expressed her indifference as a Frenchwoman might have done by that shrug of her shoulders. He was allowed to talk on without any reply; and if there is one thing more exasperating than another to a violent temper, it is the silence of the natural antagonists who ought to furnish it with the means of prolonging its utterances. He thought, like all other bad-tempered men, that this was done "a' purpose," and his passion rose higher.

"Women," he said, snarling, with a furious fear that he was not really touching them to the quick, as he intended, "women! that are supposed to clean up a house and make it pleasant! a deuced deal of that we ever see here. Train up lads in rebellion, and in thinking themselves wiser than them that's before them, that's what you can do. And sit about in the warmest corners and clog up the whole space, so that a

man can't move for them—that's women! And eat of the best like fighting-cocks, and dress themselves up like peacocks, that's all they think of. By Jove! I'd make a clean sweep of them out of this house if I had my way."

"Then you'd better have your way," said Joan; "sweep as much as you please. Mother, will you mind what I tell you, and not make a fuss? I hope I'm worth my salt wherever I go: and he knows well enough I'm the best servant he has in the house, and work for no wages, and stand bullying like ne'er another. What do I care for that rubbish? Come along upstairs with me, and let him have his room to himself and his fire to himself. He should have his house to himself if it were not for you; but for mercy's sake don't you make a fuss, and clasp your hands like that. Come along upstairs with me, and let him talk."

"Joan! Joan!" the mother whispered. "Joan! who will there be to let Harry in if you take me away? It's too early yet," she said faltering, aloud. "I've got the things to put away. I've got—many little things to do. I haven't half finished my mending. Your father's put out, he

does not mean it. It's too early yet to go to bed."

"Then I'll stay and let Harry in," said Joan, aloud, scorning the whisper. "Go you and rest, you look more dead than alive. You may trust Harry to me."

Then the master of the house, sitting in his chair with his legs stretched out in front of the fire, poured forth another volley of oaths.

"We'll just see if you let Harry in," he cried. "Harry, confound him! let him stay out, as he's gone out. I'll have none of his dissipations here, nor your conniving neither, you fools. Here, get off with you as you said. I'll lock up your things, madam. I'll take care of your keys, I'll see the house shut up. It's my business, and it's my house, not yours. You'll be cleverer than I take you for if either one or the other of you let that confounded young scapegrace in here this night."

"Oh, Joan! Joan! hold your peace! do not make things worse," cried Mrs. Joscelyn, wringing her thin hands.

Joan stood confronting her father, looking him full in the face. She was of a short and full figure, shapely enough, but without

a trace in it of her mother's grace. She kept on knitting in the very midst of the controversy, standing between the fire and the table.

"It will have to come to a crisis one time or another As well this night as another night," she said.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY IT BELONGED TO.

THE Joscelyns were of what is called an old family. Though they were of no higher degree at present than any other yeomen of the dales, they were of much greater pretensions. There were no very authentic records of this supposed historical superiority—a well-sounding name and a bit of old ruin in a corner of the land which remained to them were as much as they had to show in support of the tradition. But there were no other Joscelyns about, so that the family had evidently at one time or other been an importation from another district, and though nobody knew from whence the stock came, it was understood in the family that they had counted kin some time or other with very much finer folk. There were even old people still alive who remem-

bered the time when the Joscelyns lived with much greater grandeur than now and gave themselves all the airs of gentlefolks. These traditions had dazzled Lydia Brotherton, who, though she was only the daughter of a clergyman, and not rich or accustomed to anything very fine, was still better bred than Ralph Joscelyn of the White House, and much more "genteel" and aspiring. The Brothertons were really "well-connected people," as everybody knew. They had a baronet in the family. When there was any specially promising boy in the parish for whom an opening was wanted, the vicar knew whom to write to, and had written with such effect that one lad at least from the district had got an appointment in the custom-house in consequence. When a man can do that, he proves there is something in his claims of family. And Miss Brotherton had been brought up by a governess, which was to the homely people about, a much finer thing than going to school: and could sing songs in foreign languages, and play upon the piano, both uncommon acquirements, when she came to the White House. As for Ralph in those days he had been a very fine young fellow—the tallest, the strongest, the most bright-eyed and high-

coloured young man between Shap and Carlisle. He was first in all games, nobody venturing to contend with him in wrestling, or in any other exercise where sheer strength was an important particular. He was not "book-learned," but what did that matter? Lydia had been accustomed all her life to curates who were book-learned, and her experiences in that kind had made her less respectful of instruction than might have been desired. She made a picture to herself of all the chivalrous qualities which "good blood" ought to confer; and the big limbs and pre-eminent strength of her lover, seemed to her the plainest evidence that he was a king among men. Nobody else could throw so far or jump so high. When he was on his big mare Meg, which was still bigger in proportion than himself, the two went through thick and thin, fearing nothing. He was a man that might have led an army; that might have cut down a troop of rebels—there was no limit to his powers. All the feats of the North-country ballads and heroes became possible, nay ordinary, to her when Ralph was by. Her own slim nervous figure, in which there was no muscular strength at all, made his fine embodiment of force all the more attractive to her. There were

rumours that he was "wild," which frightened her father and mother, but Lydia was not alarmed. The curates were prim and correct as well as book-learned ; but she did not like them. And to big Ralph it seemed natural that there should be overflowings of his strength and vigour, that life in him which was so much more than the life of other men. Temper, too—no doubt he had a temper—could such a man be expected to be patient and velvet-mouthed like the Rev. John or Thomas ? "He will never be ill-tempered to me," she had said with a confident smile. The parents thought the same when they looked at their graceful daughter, and thought what a thing it would be for Ralph Joscelyn to have such a creature by his side. Of course it would make a man of him. Very likely if he had married a farmer's daughter, a nice rosy-cheeked lass, he too would have dropped into a mere dalesman without a thought beyond the "beasts" and an athletic meeting. But with Lydia, with so much vigour, and a little money and the best of blood, what might not be hoped from him ? Lydia would turn his house, which was a little homely in its appointments, into a gentleman's house. Her presence alone, along with the

tidies, and footstools, and cushions which her mother was working for her, would make an instant revolution in the appearance of the house.

For these and many other equally weighty reasons the contract was concluded, and true love, as Mrs. Brotherton remarked, carried the day—though her daughter might, no doubt, have looked higher. Ralph got a lieutenancy in the Yeomanry, which was a great thing. He was put upon the Commission of the Peace—a *fauv air* as of a country gentleman was thrown over him. After all whether a property is large or small it makes no difference in the principle of the thing, Mrs. Brotherton said. You would not put a man out of his natural rank and cease to consider him a squire because he had been obliged to part with a portion of his estate. This lady was something of an invalid, and a great deal of a casuist—it was her part in the family to explain everything and give the best of reasons. She was safe to produce a long list of arguments at ten minutes' notice, fully justifying, and that on the highest grounds, whatever the others had decided to do. And she put forth all her strength in favour of Ralph Joscelyn, so that he ended by becoming a very fine gentleman, indeed a patrician of the purest

water, a little subdued by circumstances, but blue in blood and princely in disposition like the best.

The White House to which Lydia had been brought home, as was the custom then, on the evening of her wedding day, bore very much the same aspect at that period as at the time, five-and-thirty years later, at which this story opens. It was a gray stone house, gray and cold as the fells against which its square outline showed, roomy and old-fashioned if not perhaps quite carrying out the family brag. It stood upon one of the Tower slopes a little elevated above the road. Behind it at some little distance was a small wood of firs softening down into a fringe of trees less gloomy, in the little fissure, too small to be called a glen or even a ravine, nothing more than a cut in the hillside, where a little brook brawled downwards over its pebbles, on the west side of the house. Here there were some hawthorn bushes, big and gnarled and old, a few mountain ash-trees, and birches clinging to the sides of the narrow opening, some of them stooping across the little thread of water to which they formed a sort of fringe; and at one spot a very homely little bridge overshadowed

by the birches which clustered together, dangling their delicate branches over the beck, the only pretty feature in the scene. Originally the White House had stood upon the bare hill-side, with its close grayish turf coming up close to the door in front, though there was a walled kitchen-garden on the east side. But when Mrs. Joscelyn came home a bride, a little flower-garden had been laid out in front of the door, which gave something of the air of a suburban villa to the austere hill-side house. Never was there a more forlorn little garden. Nothing would grow, and for many years its proprietors had ceased to solicit anything to grow. The grass-plots had grown gray again like the natural turf. The flower-beds were overgrown by weeds, and by a few garden flowers run wild which had lost both size and sweetness, as flowers so often do when left to nature. An oblong hall, of considerable dimensions, from which the doors of the sitting-rooms opened, and which was hung with guns and fishing-rods, and with a large stag's head adorned by enormous antlers opposite the door, made an imposing entrance to the house; but the carpets were all worn, the curtains dingy, the furniture gloomy and old; huge mahogany side-

boards, and big tables, vast square-shouldered chairs; things heavy and costly and ugly fitted the rooms; nothing for beauty, or even comfort. It seemed hard indeed to know for what such furniture was made, save for endurance, to wear as long as possible.

Young Mrs. Joscelyn when she came home had hung her antimacassars over the chairs, she had put out her "Keepsake" and "Friendship's Offering" upon the table, and placed her guitar in the most favourable position; and then she sat down to be happy. Poor gentle young woman! She had been the pet at home, the only daughter. She had been considered the most accomplished of girls. Whatever she said had secured the smiles and admiration of father and mother; all that she did had been pretty, had been sweet, not from any quality of its own, but because it was Liddy who did it. To describe the extraordinary sensation with which she woke up a few months after her marriage, perhaps not so much, to discover that Liddy having done it, made nothing attractive or charming, would be impossible. It took away from her all her little confidence in herself, all her faith in those around her. Very soon—so soon that it seemed immediately,

the next day—her husband made it very clearly visible that Liddy was the synonym not for everything that was pleasant, but for all the awkwardness, the foolishness, the inappropriate words and inconvenient actions of the house. “It is just like you,” he began to say to her, long before the first summer was over. For a time she tried to think it was “Ralph’s way,” but that did not stand her long in stead. And with her opinion of herself, her confidence in everything else gradually deserted her. She recognised that the Joscelyns’ blue blood did very little for them, that old Uncle Harry was often less polite than Isaac Oliver who was his hind, and more dreadful still, an admission she never would make to herself, that the very curates whom she had despised were beside her patrician Ralph like beings of another world.

Perhaps of all that happened to her in her after-life there was no shock so terrible as this first disenchantment. She had a large family, plunging into all the roughnesses of life, its nursery prose and bread-and-butter, without any interval of repose, without money enough or leisure enough to put any glow of prettiness upon the rude circumstances, the band of children—noisy

boys who made an end of all her attempts at neatness, and gobbled their food and tore their clothes, and were dirty and disorderly as any cottage brood. She struggled on among them as best she could, always watching every new baby wistfully to see if perhaps a something like herself, a child who would be her very own and speak her language and understand her meaning might be born to her. But alas! they were Joscelyns every one, big-limbed creatures with light blue eyes, and great red cheeks, who stared at her cynically out of their very cradles, and seemed to demand what she was making a fuss about when she sang them to sleep. Poor woman, she was always hopeful; every newchild that came was, she thought, at last the one for whom she had been pining. Even now she had a lingering notion that Harry, her youngest boy, was that child—and far more than a notion, a hopeful certainty that little Liddy at school, the youngest of all, was exactly what she herself had been at the same age. These two, were in fact the least like Joscelyns of all her children. Harry was a broad-shouldered young fellow indeed, but he was less tall, and less powerful than his brothers; he had taken a little more to books;

and there were traces in him of something less matter-of-fact than the stolid, steady nature of Will and Tom, and Benjamin and Hartley, all now established in occupations, and some of them in houses of their own. Will and Tom were married; they had both descended a single step lower down than the position of their father, marrying, one of them, the daughter of a farmer, and the other, the only child of a famous "vet," who gave her what was understood to be "a tidy bit of money," and to whose business the young man hoped to succeed. It was a coming down in the world to his mother. But how could she help it? With so many boys to provide for, the Joscelyn pride had to be put in their pocket. Hartley was in Colorado, Ben in New Zealand, all struggling along in much the same kind of occupation which their father pursued at home. As for Harry he had been rather delicate, a circumstance of which his mother was almost proud, as showing his affinity to her side of the house. And he was in an office in Liverpool, an occupation more fit for a delicate youth than the rough sheep-farming and horse-selling of the Fells. It was time now that something should be decided about his career. Was he to have a little money to invest,

to get him a small share in the concern? He had been clerk long enough, Harry thought—long enough for himself and long enough too for his employer, who wanted a partner, but no further clerks.

This was the question which at present agitated the house. Each of the sons as he established himself in life had done so with a quarrel, often a series of wranglings; but they had all taken it more easily than Harry. Certainly Harry was the one most like his mother. Her heart yearned over him. She took a little pride in him too, more than it was possible to take in Tom and Will and their rough affairs. A merchant in Liverpool sounded better, and Harry in his black coat looked, his mother thought, more like a gentleman than any of the others. For the first time for all these years she had been able to recall to her mind what a gentleman looked like, and the pride which had been natural to a well-connected person, a clergyman's daughter, had begun to dawn faintly, timidly, once more within her. Supposing that the baronet, who was the head of her family, should ever inquire into the fortunes of his humble relation, Harry was the one she had always thought who could be

put forward. "One of her sons is a merchant in Liverpool," how often had she taken refuge in this as a thing that might be said to Sir John, if ever at long and last he should make inquiries after Liddy Brotherton. The others, alas! were not very presentable; but Harry and Liddy might, if the inquiry came soon, while they were yet young and amenable, show themselves with the best. These were the secret thoughts in Mrs. Joscelyn's heart. She had not given up yet; she was always ready to begin again; day by day her hope renewed itself, her disappointments went out of her mind. And thus she went on daily laying herself open to fresh disappointments because of these new hopes.

As for her husband, he was no unusual type of his class. He had a great deal of the rough arrogance which characterises it. When he was among his neighbours it got him ill-will, but still he could hold his own among them; domineering over the gentler sort, tyrannical to his servants, but only altogether unjust and unkind to those who were weak and in subjection to him. It was his own family who felt this most. For women he had an absolute contempt, unveiled by any of those polite pretences with which ordi-

nary men holding this opinion sometimes consent to conceal it from motives of general expediency. His wife had been to him a pretty lass, for whom he had a passion *dans le temps*, and whom he had been rather proud to win, at the moment, as a lady and full of dainty ways, superior to those of the other pretty lasses in his sphere. It was right and natural that he, a Joscelyn, should have a lady for his wife, one who would not have looked at any other yeoman in the county, and who, indeed, had refused one or two better matches than himself for his sake. He knew that it was a fine thing to be a Joscelyn, though he did not know very well in what this consisted. It entitled him to be called Ralph Joscelyn, Esq., of the White House, when the other rough Dalesmen had scarcely so much as a Mr. to their names, and it gave him a general vague sense of superiority and of personal elation, as a man made of a different stuff from that out of which his neighbours were shaped. But though he was proud of this, he knew nothing about it. He was just as capable of investigating into "the old Joscelyns," and tracing them to their real origin, as he was of exploring the sources of the Nile. He did not know, even, what it was

which made it such an advantage to him to belong to those old Joscelyns, but he accepted it as a benefit which was no doubt to be partially attributed to his own excellence and high qualities. After the first flush of youth was over, he considered his wife no longer as a lady whom it was a pride to have won, but as a creature belonging to him, like one of his dogs, but not so docile or invariably lovable as his dogs. They all followed and worshipped him obsequiously, whether he was kind to them or not, condoning all his contrary actions, and ready to receive a caress with overflowing gratitude, and forget the kick by which it had been preceded. Mrs. Joscelyn had not the sense of the dogs; she struggled for a time to get the place which her imagination had pictured—that of the poetical mate, the help-meet, the sharer of her husband's life; and when sent "to heel" with a kick, she had not taken it as the dogs did, but allowed the dismay, the disenchantment, the consternation which overwhelmed her to be seen in her face. Since then Joscelyn had emancipated himself altogether from any bondage of affection or respect. He frankly despised the woman he owned; despised her for her weakness, for the

interruptions of illness to which she was subject, for her tremblings and nervous terrors, in short, for being a woman and his wife. Their life together had contained scarcely an element of beauty or happiness of any kind. She had remained with him by force of circumstances, because it had never occurred to her as possible that she could do anything else. In these days people did not think of obtaining relief from the special burdens of their lives, or of throwing them off. A woman who had a bad or unkind husband endured him, as she would in all likelihood have endured a constitutional ailment, as a thing to be concealed from others as much as possible and made the best of, without seeking after doctors or medicines. It was a cross which had been put upon her to bear. She had happened badly in the lottery of life, drawn a bad number, an unhappy lot; but now there was nothing for it but to lie upon the bed that had been made for her, and to cut her coat according to her cloth.

And thus life had gone on for five-and-thirty years. The number of miseries that can be borne in that time is incalculable, as wonderful as the tenacity with which human nature can

support them, and rise every morning to a consciousness of them, yet go on all the same, scarcely less vigorous, in some cases more vigorous, than those to whom existence is happiness. No one in the White House was happy after the age of childhood, but nobody minded much except the mother, who had this additional burden to bear that the expectation of at least some future happiness in her children, never died out of her. Perhaps being no wiser than her neighbours she missed some legitimate if humble happiness, which she might have had, by not understanding how much real strength and support might have been found in the stout and homely affection of her eldest daughter, who was not in the least like her, and did not understand her, nor flatter her with any sympathy, yet who stood steadfastly by her and shielded her, and furthered her wishes when they could be divined, with a friendly, half-compassionate, sometimes impatient support. But Joan had been critical from her very cradle, always conscious of the "fuss" which her mother only became conscious of making when she saw it in the half-mocking question in her children's eyes. No, Mrs. Joscelyn would have said to herself, Joan was a good girl—though it

seemed a misnomer to call her a girl, so mature as she was, in some indefinable way older than her mother—a good girl; but not one that was like her, or understood her, or knew what she meant. Perhaps Harry might, if she could get any good of him, if she did not always live in terror of a deadly quarrel between him and his father which would drive her last boy from the house; and Liddy, little Liddy would—no doubt Liddy would when she came back from her school. But all her other children had been Joscelyns, not one of them like her. She was even tremblingly conscious that Harry was growing less like her side of the house every day; but she clung to her little girl as her perfect representative, a last hope and compensation for the uncomprehended life she had led all these weary years.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNGEST SON.

HARRY JOSCELYN had been said in the nursery to be a sweet-tempered child; and he had lived upon the reputation through all the impatient years of youth, during which he had not been sweet-tempered, but decidedly "contrary," as all the Joscelyns were. Notwithstanding the fact that the Joscelyns thought a great deal of themselves, and the vague grandeur of their ancestry, education had always been a very doubtful necessity in the house. Ralph Joscelyn himself had been at school it was supposed in the natural course, and could write and read and make up his accounts, which was all that was necessary; and it had not occurred to him that his sons wanted more. Such nervous attempts as their mother made to secure for

them advantages to which she on her side, as a clergyman's daughter, attached a value which was more superstitious than enlightened, only strengthened her husband's conviction that the ways of horses were much better worth learning than anything that could be got out of books. Harry had been the exception ; he was the godson of an old uncle who lived in the nearest town, and who also had a tidy bit of money to leave behind him, a qualification which gave him great credit among his kinsfolks, and made his recommendation potent. He it was who had procured for Harry the education which made him superior to his brethren. Uncle Henry had gone so far as to permit the boy to live in his house while he attended school, and as this seemed a plain indication that the boy was to be his heir there had not been a word to say against it. As for Mrs. Joscelyn, she had triumphed sadly in the fate which satisfied her wishes while taking her solace from her. She thought ever after that if Harry had not been taken from her at that susceptible period of his life, he would have been a comfort to her in his later years, and never would have forsaken his mother. But we are all apt to find out afterwards the disadvantages which

attend every piece of good fortune. At the first proposal it had seemed something too good to be hoped for. When it was intimated to her that Harry was to go to the Grammar School at Wyburgh, at Uncle Henry's cost, and was to be housed under Uncle Henry's roof and cared for by his housekeeper, whose only fault was that she was too kind to the rough boys—whom she only of all the dependants of the family, insisted upon calling the young gentlemen—there was a sort of *Nunc Dimittis* in Mrs. Joscelyn's heart. If only she could hope for anything as good for Liddy, though Liddy was but a baby in those days! But when Harry, the one who she fondly thought would understand her, was gone, his mother wrung her hands over that as over so many other troubles. From that time forth she had never again felt that he understood her. He veered from her side, to which he had been so constant, and preferred the rough sports of the other boys, and even to hear his father's stories of desperate rides, and cunning mares, and all the adventures of the stable, better than to walk and talk with her as he had once done. Perhaps it was natural, no doubt it was quite natural;

but what is from one side the thing most clearly to be expected, is often a most painful revelation on the other. Harry was for five years in Uncle Henry's house, during which time his mother formed many fine visions of what might happen to him. She thought he would most certainly get the exhibition and go to Cambridge, and become a scholar like his grandfather, and might then perhaps eventually become a clergyman, and afford her in the end of her life a refuge of peaceful sweetness like that once lightly thought of, but now so fondly looked back upon, sweet peaceful parsonage of her girlhood. But Harry, as a matter of fact, was never within a hundred miles of the exhibition. It was won by a lad who was nobody, who had no blood to speak of in his veins, and nobody to care much whether he succeeded or not. Then Mrs. Joscelyn thought that Uncle Henry would very likely draw that long purse, which was supposed much longer at the White House than it was in reality, and out of family pride, and to give himself the satisfaction of a nephew at college, would send the boy to Cambridge, even without the exhibition. But even that was not to be.

Harry himself for his part was not very grateful to Uncle Henry for his education. He would rather have been at home riding the colts, in the middle of all the fun. And he was not very fond of the education, any more than of the old man who gave it to him. He saw the disadvantages much more than the advantages of his position, as most people, and especially most young people, do. He had no fervid desire for learning, though his mother thought so; and to be as quiet as a mouse in that carefully arranged bachelor's house was not half so pleasant as rushing in and out after his own fancy at home. He obeyed while he was a boy, but he was not grateful; and when he began to be a young man and the end of his studies approached, he was neither grateful nor obedient. He went in for all the sports in the neighbourhood, and persistently, though without any temper, defied his uncle. The result was that instead of being sent to Cambridge and made a scholar of and Uncle Henry's avowed heir, which was all on the cards at one time, Harry was placed in the office in Liverpool where Uncle Henry had made his money. It was "a fine opening," the old man said; but it did not much please anybody con-

cerned. Mrs. Joscelyn felt as if she had tumbled from the top of the stairs to the bottom when she heard that all her hopes were to come to nothing better than this. And Harry himself who had begun to be proud of his education, though he did not love it, went about with a very grave countenance, furtively examining the faces of all concerned, that he might see what hope there was of an alteration in his fate. But his father had too many sons to quarrel with any provision for the youngest of them, and his mother had no power whatever, and there was nobody else who could help him. So he went to Liverpool at last, notwithstanding his own and his mother's reluctance, and once there soon began to appreciate the advantage of his liberty and an income of his own. He had been frugally bred, and had never known what it was to have money before. His income seemed a fortune at first, but after a while Harry did not consider it in this light; and to tell the truth his application to his father for funds to push his fortune, to get advancement and a partnership, meant also a something, a little margin to pay sundry debts which his inexperience had been beguiled into, and which appalled him as soon as he had discovered

that his income was less inexhaustible than he thought; and he had come home for his yearly holiday with the determination, by hook or by crook, to get this change in his position effected, and to be done with debt for ever and ever.

The house in Liverpool where Uncle Henry had made his fortune was by no means a great house. It had gone on very steadily since the old man retired from it, and now there was a need for new blood. Harry had explained all this when he went to see his uncle, and had done all that was possible to do short of asking for the money to show to Uncle Henry how highly expedient it was to "come forward" on such an occasion. But the old gentleman had not taken the hint. And then Harry had spoken to his mother, urging her to make an effort to get her own little fortune, if possible, from his father's hands, and invest it in the business. To get it from his father's hands! it would have been as easy to get him the moon out of the skies. Mrs. Joscelyn would have set out on any journey, would even have consented to be shot out of a big cannon, like the hero of M. Jules Verne, in order to get her boy what he wanted. But get it from his father! She sank back upon herself at the

mere suggestion. Nothing in heaven or earth was less possible.

Then Harry had taken it in hand himself. He was not one who had ever "got on" with his father. Notwithstanding his long absence from home, as soon as they met it seemed that they could not avoid jangling. An impulse to contradict everything his father said seemed somehow the first thing in Harry's mind; and Joscelyn himself, always dogmatical, was never so much so, never so impatient of any expression of opinion as when it was his youngest son who made it. It may be imagined then if Mrs. Joscelyn had reason for her alarm when Harry at last took the bull by the horns, as he said, and ventured to propound to his father the tremendous idea that he wanted money. The young man was a little alarmed by it himself. He took the bull by the horns with a weak rush at last, his mind so deranged by the traditions of the house and the alarming presence of his father, that his appeal was quite wanting in the business-like form he had intended to give it. What he meant to say was, that here was an excellent opportunity for investing a little money, that it would bring in good interest, and would be perfectly safe, and

would give him a great step in life—all these things together. But instead of this he blundered and stumbled, and gave his father to understand that his mother was quite willing and anxious that her money should be employed in this way, and that the return would be far better if it were put into his hands than any other possible use of it could give.

“So you’ve been plotting with your mother,” Joscelyn had said. “What the blank has she to do with it? What the dash does she mean by interfering? I’ve a good mind to kick you out of the house—both her and you.”

“It is her money,” said Harry, confronting his father; though, indeed, had it not been for necessity and opposition the idea of anything belonging to his mother was the last thought that would have occurred to him.

“*Her* money!” Joscelyn had cried out in a tempest of scorn and wrath, filling the room with whirlwinds of oaths; and what with the fierce impulse of contradiction in him, and the desire he had to have his way, Harry had felt his genuine germ of affection for his mother blown up into red hot heat and passion by all that his father proceeded to say. “*Her* money! Let her

dare to say it was her money—to a man that had supported and put up with a dashed useless blank all this time that was no more good in a house than an old rag! Let her just come and say it was her money—he would show her the difference; he would tell her whose money it was that kept up her dashed pretensions. To be sure it was a lady she was—a parson's daughter with a fortune of her own. Oh, dash it all—her money; this was about too much for any man to bear.” Harry had made a great effort to keep his temper, and he had allowed all this flood to pour itself out. He was very much in earnest, and anxious, now that he had opened the question, to get some advantage from it. Then he tried another expedient.

“I have never cost you a penny,” he said; “the others have all got something out of you. You have never spent a penny upon me.”

And then the veins swelled upon Joscelyn's forehead. He swore half a million of oaths, cursing his son by every possible mode of imprecation.

“Cost me nothing! you dashed puppy!” he cried; “you've cost me a deal more than money, you ——!” (Though it takes away the spirit

and energy of his style, and turns it into tameness, I cannot pretend to report Mr. Joscelyn's expletives, having no sufficient knowledge of the variations to help me in rendering them) "You've cost me that woman's dashed smirking and smiling, and that old scarecrow's brags and blows. I'd sooner you had cost me a fortune. I've had that to put up with as I'll put up with again from nobody. Made me feel like a beggar, by ——! with that old blank grinning at me, and poking his advices at me. If it was for nothing but to spite him you shouldn't have a penny from me."

"And do you mean to say," cried Harry, indignant, "that you will sacrifice my prospects to show your independence of my uncle? I could believe a great deal of you, father (which was a wrong thing to say), but I couldn't have believed anything so bad as that."

And then it was that Joscelyn pushed back his chair, and clenched his fist, and gave his son to understand what he thought of him.

"There's not one of the others but is worth two of you," he said, "they're a bit like Joscelyns; you're your mother's breed, you white-faced shop-keeping cur. And ask me to put my

money in a filthy concern across a counter, me that have the best blood in all Cumberland in my veins, and my name to keep up; I'll see you at—Jericho first; I'll see you in the churchyard first. D'ye think I want you to keep up the family? If you were the heir there might be something to be said. Heir, yes! and something worth being heir to: Joscelyns. Put your finger on one blessed peerage in the country that has as good blood as mine to go with it; but I've plenty of lads worth counting on, I don't want anything to say to you."

"Blood won't do much for us, without a little money," Harry said.

"That shows what blood you've come of; your mother's milk-and-water, not mine. I can't take the name from you——"

"What do you mean?" cried Harry, springing to his feet. He had held himself in so long that now his passion would have vent, though he knew very well it was upon a fictitious occasion. "What do you mean?" he cried; "do you mean to slander my mother?" and faced this domestic tyrant with blazing eyes.

Joscelyn laughed scornfully.

"You can take it as you please," he said.

"You're of her breed, not mine. Flare up as you like, it don't touch me. You're a poor, weakly piece of goods to carry a big name, but I can't take it from you. Only mind you what I say, don't ask a penny from me, for you'll not get it; not a sixpence, not a farthing from me."

"I'll never trouble you again, that you may be sure. It is now or never," cried Harry, worked to a pitch of passion which he could not restrain. And again, Joscelyn laughed, with a shout that blew into Harry's indignant face, and moved his hair.

This sensation half maddened the young man. He pushed away his chair, throwing it down with a clang that rang over all the house, and crying, "That's settled, then!" darted out and flung himself forth, out of the flush and heat of the quarrel into the cool and wintry freshness of the night.

Other interviews before this had ended in the same way. It is the worst of domestic quarrels that they are endless and full of repetition. What would be decisive between two friends is not decisive between two members of the same family, who are forced to meet again, and go over the same ground for scores of times. Harry

Joscelyn had felt the same tingle and thrill as of fire in his veins before now, the same determination to fling out of sight, out of recollection of this tyrant who was his father, and who became periodically insupportable to him. He plunged out into the cold without any upper coat, his body all tingling with heat and shame, as his mind did. Indeed, he was at a pass in which body and mind so sympathize with each other as to feel like one. He sped along the familiar road in the white soft mist of the moonlight. The great slope of the Fells behind was the only object that loomed through that faint vaporous atmosphere, in which the light seemed diffused and disintegrated into a woolly confusing veil. The road lay between two grey dykes; there were no trees or bushes to interrupt or throw shadows into the general haze. He seemed to breathe it, as well as move in it; and after the first minute it chilled him to the very marrow of his bones. The whiteness made it colder, cold without and within, in the body and in the mind. And gradually it had upon the heated youth the effect of a cold bath, quenching out the warmth in him. His steps grew less hurried, he began to be able to think, not only, with a furious absorption over all his father's

words and ways, but with a recurring thought of his overcoat, and all the comfort he might have got out of it, which, though it was not a great matter, still gradually set up something to balance the other matter in his mind.

He walked quickly, his rapid youthful steps warning whosoever might be out and about, of his approach. There was no doubtfulness in these steps; he was not wandering vaguely, but had a certain end before him, the parlour of the "Red Lion," which had made his mother wring her hands as much as all the other painful circumstances of the night. He had persuaded himself, as soon as the first novelty of his return home was over, that he had nowhere else to go. To sit between his mother and Joan in the parlour, they could not suppose that a young fellow would do that. Women are unreasonable; they had supposed it, not knowing in their own accustomedness and unexpectancy how dull it was. There was nothing very lively going on at the "Red Lion," and a mother and sister might have been excused for wondering what charm there was in the dull and drowsy talk, the slow filling of glasses, the rustic opinions and confused ideas of the company there. Harry

did not find much charm in it, but it was more congenial than sitting with the women. He was angry when his father assailed his mother, feeling it a kind of assault upon his own side, but his father's ceaseless scorn of her, which he had known all his life, had influenced him in spite of himself. To sit at home with two women in a parlour was out of the question. The other parlour was not entertaining, but it was not home, and that was always something. The "Red Lion" was in the middle of the village, which lay on a considerably lower level than that of the White House, clustered upon the stream which divided the valley. It was quite a small stream ordinarily, but at present it was swollen with spring rains and with the melted snow, and made a faint roar in the night as it swept under the bridge, with here and there a gleam of light reflected in it from the neighbouring houses. It was not with any very highly raised expectations that Harry turned his eyes towards these lights. He would get out of the cold, that was one thing, and into the light, and would see something different from his father's furious countenance, or his mother's pale one, or Joan's eyes, that paid attention to everything but her

knitting. How strange it is that home, which is paradise at five, and so pleasant a place at fifteen, should be intolerable at five-and-twenty! As he approached the corner at which, coming from his exile at Wyburgh, he had first caught sight of the lights in the White House, he could not help remembering the shout of delight he used to send forth. How pleasant it had been to come home from Uncle Henry's prim old place! but what was home to him now? at the best a duty, a weariness. As he began to think of this a kind of desire, a longing to go far away came over him. Why shouldn't he go away? His mother would not like it, but nobody else would mind. His mother was the only creature, he reflected, whom he cared for at home; and of course it was his duty to come and see her from time to time. But an hour at the utmost exhausted what he had to say to her; indeed, he had never had so much to say to her as it would take an hour to tell. Half-an-hour, perhaps, now and then—that he would like to keep up, just to please her; and it would please himself too. But he did not care for any more. As for all the rest, he did not mind, not he! if he never saw the White House again.

Thus he was thinking as he hastened along the road, his hasty feet ringing upon the path notwithstanding that it was somewhat damp and the atmosphere dull, giving forth no particular echo. Some one else was coming along the Wyburgh Road, a small uncertain blackness in the white atmosphere. Harry knew very well at the first glance who it was, as familiar a figure as any in the country side. Anybody would have known him by his step even, that peculiar step as of one springy foot and one shuffling one which gave a one-sided movement to the man, and an unmistakable rhythm to the sound of him. Perhaps he knew Harry's step too, for he paused at the corner, turning his face in the way the young man was coming.

"Who will that be?" he said, in the obscurity, "if I'm no mista'en an angry man—"

"It's I, Isaac," said Harry, "angry enough if that would do me any good."

"It's you, Mr. Hairy! that was what I thought. No, it does little good; but so long as you wear it off in the feet of ye, my lad, and keep it out o' th' other end—"

"It's very easy talking! Keep it out of the other end! I would like to know for my part,"

cried the young man, glad of utterance, "why old folks should go against young folks in the way they do. It's like a disease, as if they couldn't help it. The more reasonable a thing is, the more they don't see it. It's enough to make a fellow break with everything, and take himself off to the end of the earth."

"There might be sense in that—if the ends of th' earth would take ye from yoursel', Mr. Harry. But that's queer talking for the like of you that have always had your own gate." He had come close up to the young man and was gazing keenly up at him. "Have you no had your ain gate? I dreamt it then. T' auld maister was o' that mind."

"Uncle Henry?—Isaac, you're a good old fellow—you've always been kind to me; but don't talk nonsense, if you please. Uncle Henry of that mind! did he ever let me do anything I wanted to do? from the day I went to him till the day I left."

"Tut, tut, Mr. Harry, he always wished you weel—always weel; and if you have patience, you'll get it all, every penny; just have patience," the new comer said, patting Harry's arm coaxingly. And then he drew a little closer, still

with his fingers on Harry's arm. "And where may you be going, my braw lad, at this hour of the night with your face turned from home?"

"Going? what does it matter where I am going. I don't mind if it was into the river there, or out of the world. Well, if you will have it, I'm going to the 'Red Lion' to rest a bit and come to myself."

At this Isaac shook his head; he went on shaking it as if he had been a little mechanical figure, which could not stop itself if once started. "T' auld maister would never have allowed that," he said.

"What do I care for the auld master? I'm my own master, and nobody shall stand in my way," cried Harry, putting his hand in his turn on Isaac's arm, and swinging him out of the path. He was impatient of the interruption. "I'll go where I have a mind and bide where I have a mind, and I would like to know who'll stop me," he cried.

Isaac thus suddenly wheeled about and taken by surprise, went spinning across the road, recovering himself with an effort. But he did not show any anger. He stood looking after the young man as soon as he had recovered his

balance with a "Tck—tck—tck" of his tongue against the roof of his mouth. "It's my duty to see after him," old Isaac said, at length, slowly shuffling along in the young man's steps. There was a certain satisfaction in his tone. The "Red Lion" was forbidden ground—still if there was a motive, a suitable reason for it. "Ay, ay," said Isaac to himself, "a plain duty; so far as I can tell, there's never a one to look the gate he's going but only me."

CHAPTER IV.

"THE RED LION."

THE parlour of the "Red Lion" was a room with a sanded floor, protected on the side next the door by wooden barriers with seats fixed into them, which acted the part at once of settles, and screens to keep out the draught. There was a bright fire which kept it in a blaze of ruddy light, outdoing the lamps, which were not remarkable for their brilliancy. This fire was the great attraction of the place. The very distant prospect of it, gleaming out into the night, warmed and cheered the passer-by. It was like a lantern ever so far down the river side, on which the back window, partially veiled with a bit of old red curtain which let the light shine through and added a tone of warmth the more, looked out. You saw this window from the Wyburgh Road, and

from all the cold flats of the water-side. The poor women at the Smiddy-houses, which was the name of the hamlet to the west, thought it a snare of Satan, and compared it vindictively to the red glaring eye of some evil spirit lying in wait to devour the unwary. But unfortunately the men were not of that opinion. Old Isaac, who was on his way home when he encountered Harry, and who was perfectly sincere in his opinion that nothing could be worse for his young master than to go to such a place, felt, notwithstanding, in his own person a thrill of internal satisfaction when he saw that it was his duty to follow and watch over the young fellow. It was wrong—but it was exhilarating: instead of trudging another slow mile home, to get into the corner of one of those wooden settles and feel the glow of the generous fire, and imbibe slowly a glass of "summat," and suck slowly at the tube of a long clay pipe, and make a remark once in five minutes to one of the neighbours, who each of them took an equally long time to produce an original observation—had all the delight of dissipation in it. Most strange of enjoyments! and yet an enjoyment it was. To Isaac's eye Mr. Harry did not, by any means, get the same good out of it. He asked for

"summat," to be sure, like the others, but swallowed it as if it had been medicine ; and, instead of reposing on the settle, sat with his head in his hands poring over an old local paper, or walked restlessly about the room, now looking out at the window, now penetrating into the bar ; a disturbing influence, interfering fatally with the drowsy ease of the place. Isaac was a man who had a just confidence in his own power of setting things straight and giving good advice, and had boldly faced temptation in his own person in order to do a moral service to the young man, for whom he felt a certain responsibility. But having done so much, he could not but feel that the young sinner whom he had risked his soul for, should have enjoyed it more. All the influences about the fire, the rest, the pipe, the glass of "summat," were adapted to produce a certain toleration and deadening of the moral sense. Still the "Red Lion" was wrong ; Isaac knew that his missis gave forth no uncertain sound on this point, and, for himself, he was also of opinion that it was wrong ; but there could be no doubt that it was pleasant. Mr. Harry, however, was not taking the good of it as a man fully aware of the attractions of the place ought to do, and this gave Isaac energy

after a while to address certain remonstrances to him. He went so far as to get up at last out of that most desirable place in the corner of the settle near the fire. To abandon that was a piece of self-denial that proved his sincerity in the most striking way to himself, and could not fail, he thought, to overcome even the scepticism of his missis. "I got a fine warm corner just by t' fire, wi' a lean to my back and a table to hand, and aw as a mon could desire; but I oop, and I's after Mr. Harry. 'Mr. Harry,' says I"—involuntarily this plea shaped itself in Isaac's mind, as after much hesitation he rose. He took a long pipe from the table, not caring to give up his own, and put it in the corner to keep his place, though with many doubts of the efficacy of the proceeding; for how could it be expected that a new-comer, with the chill of the night upon him, would abstain from taking possession of the coveted place when protected only by so slight a sign of previous rights? "Keep an eye on t' glass, will ye?" he said to his neighbour in the other corner—hoisting himself up with a suppressed groan. His clothes were hot to the touch with the intense glow of the fire; but a labouring man who has been at work in the cold all day can brave a great deal of warmth afterwards. Then

he went up to Harry, who just then had thrown himself into a chair near the window, and tapped with his long pipe upon his arm.

"Mr. Harry—summat's amiss more than ornary. Nobody blongin' would approve to see ye here; but bein' here, it's expeckted as you'll take the good on it—and you're getting no good on't, Mr. Harry. Lord bless ye, what's gone wrong?"

"Nothing you can help me in, Isaac," said the young man.

"Maybe no; but aw the same, maybe ay. I've put mysel' in the way of harm to be of service to you, Mr. Harry. I hope it'll no be counted again' me. I've done what I donno do, not once in a three months. Not as there's much harm to be got here; but it's exciting, that's what it is—carries a man off his feet that isn't just settled and knows what he's doing. And when you made a sacrifice for a friend," said Isaac, with a wave of his pipe, "you donno like to think as it's to be no use."

All this time the drone of the slow rural talk was going on, now and then with an equally slow chuckle of laughter; a pipe waved occasionally to help out a more than usually difficult delivery; a glass set down with a little noise in the fervour of an address accomplished; a low tranquil hum,

provocative of slumber than excitement one would have said ; but Isaac thought otherwise. At a table in the room a few card-players were gathering. And somebody with a new newspaper full of novel information—the last was more than a week old—had just come in. The young fellow, gloomy behind backs, and his Mentor, who was so kindly devoting himself to his service, were losing all that was going on. To make a little moral slip like this, and yet lose all the advantage of it, was distracting.

"Come, come, Mr. Harry," Isaac said, probing him in the shoulder with his pipe, partly encouraging, partly threatening, "out with it, man; or else let it a be and take your pleasure—take your pleasure, bein' here. It's not a place I'd bid you come—far from it. It's running your head into temptation, that's the truth ; but Lord bless us, bein' in for't take the good on't—that's what I say."

The man with the paper was hovering about Isaac's seat; but he was not so habituated to extremes of temperature as Isaac. "No, no," he said with a chuckle, "I'm not a-going to roast yet a bit. Maybbe that'll come after ; but I dunno who'd make a cinder of hissel' as long as he can help it. No, no, I'll keep my distance ; it's like the

fiery furnace in the Bible—that's what it's like."

"It's none too warm for me," said the man at the other corner of the fire—and then they all laughed, though why it would be hard to say. Isaac watched this little episode at a distance, his eyes following his inclinations, which were all with the humours of the "company." He chuckled, too, in a kind of regretful echo of their laughter; but he was relieved to see that his place was still kept for him. He turned again to Harry with that sense of losing all the fun, which made him vehement. "Mr. Harry," he said, "bein' here, take your pleasure a bit! It don't do no more harm to be lively like, when you're here, than to be i' th' dumps. It's again' my principles; and it'll be moor again' me when the missis comes to hear on't—but, gosh! when a man *is* here ——"

"You think he might as well get tipsy when he's about it? I am much obliged to you for your advice, but I don't think I'll take it, Isaac," said Harry. "Mind yourself, my old man, or there's no telling what the missis may say."

"That's all y^{our} fun, Mr. Harry," said Isaac with dignity; "there's some you might say that to; but I'm a moral man, and always was. You never heard nought of the sort o' Isaac Oliver.

Coming here as I've told ye is not a thing I hold wi'—short o' a strong reason like the present—short o' plucking a brand out o' t' burning like I'm doing now, you'll not catch me night nor day, heat nor cold, in a public. I pass the door," Isaac said with pride, "ten times in a week or more, but who e'er sees me turn in 'cept for a strong occasion like the present? Nay, nay, if you were outside I'd go on my knees to ye to bide outside; but I say again, master, bein' here, why, it's best to conduct yourself as if you were here. What is the good o' looking as if ye were at t' kirk? You're not at t' kirk, that's the fac'. Bein' here," he continued, slowly waving his pipe in the air, and giving himself over to his oratorical impulse. "Bein' here ——"

"Isaac—t' auld maister as you call him—is he at home?"

This sudden interruption was very startling. Isaac had drunk little; but there was a sort of imaginative intoxication abroad in the genial atmosphere of the "Red Lion," and he was infected with the drowsy conviviality of the place, to which half shut eyes and a sleepy complacency seemed habitual. This sudden question was like a *douche* of cold water in his face. He stopped

short in his speech with a sort of gasp, and stared at his companion.

"Ay, master—he's at home," said Isaac, slowly; but being a prudent Northcountryman he was sorry for this admission as soon as he had made it; "if he haven't started again," he added, cautiously. "Now and again he'll start off ——"

"That's nonsense," said Harry, sharply. "I hope I know his ways as well as you do. I'll go and see him to-morrow and have it out."

"A man may change his ways," said Isaac, oracularly. "Now and again he'll start off—givin' no notice," he added, with gradual touches of invention; "restless like—old folks do get restless, and nobody can deny that." Then he paused, shuffling and embarrassed. "I wouldn't, Master Harry, if I was you," he added, in a lower tone and with great earnestness. "I wouldn't, Master Harry, if I was you. T'auld master's a droll un. He's fonder of you than e'er another; but he'll never be drove—what he's going to do he'll do right straight away. He'll not be asked. How do I know as you're going to ask him for aught? I donno, and that's the truth; but I wouldn't if I was you. Hev patience, just hev a bit of

patience, and ye'll get it all. But he'll never do what he's bid to do. You was always his pet, bein' named for him, and so on. He'll leave you all he's got if you'll hev patience; but ask him and he'll not give a penny, not for the best reasons in all the world."

"Who said I wanted a penny from him?" said the young man, piqued. "You are too fond of guessing, Isaac, my good fellow—you go too far."

Isaac made no immediate reply. He knocked out the ashes of his pipe carefully against the window-ledge. "I'm maybe good at guessing," he said at length, slowly, with a grave countenance, "and maybe no. But I'm your friend, Master Harry, and I ken t' auld master. Them that meddles with him does it at their peril. Don't you go near him, that's my advice. You'll hev it all, every penny, if you'll hev a little patience. He's nearer eighty nor seventy, and he canno' last for evermore."

"Patience!" cried Harry, tilting back his chair against the wall. It was all very well for the elder people to have patience, for Uncle Herry, perhaps, who had nothing but Death to wait for that always comes too soon. But young

Harry with life waiting for him, and advancement, and all that youth can give—youth that only comes once, and lasts but a little while; for him it was a very different matter. And his heart was hot with passion against his father, and against fate, which seemed to shut him in. He was too much excited to keep his voice under control as he had been doing. "Patience!" he cried. "Pah! if that's all, you can keep your advice to yourself."

This sounded something like a quarrel, and the "Red Lion" was too warm and drowsy and comfortable to like the idea of a quarrel. The people about looked dimly round from amid the smoke; and a good-humoured person at the card-table was amiable enough to put himself in the breach. "Nay, nay, my young gentleman," he said; "patience, bless you's for them that can't play at nought else. Take a hand at cribbage, that's your sort. Whist if ye like, that's all the fashion; but to my mind cribbage is the game ——"

"Ay, ay, master, a grand game," said two or three together, wagging their beards in civil backing up of the first speaker, who stood smiling at the table, running the cards through his hands like

a stream of water. They all looked vaguely at Harry with a general look of invitation and goodwill in their eyes. The atmosphere of the "Red Lion" was against all strenuous action. The warmth which was so cheerful and bright made them all drowsy. They sat and blinked at it with pleasure and peacefulness, purring softly in the pervading warmth. What had young Harry to do in such a sleepy place? He let his chair come down to the floor with a noise that made the convives jump, and laughed, chiefly at himself. "Come along, then," he said; "I'll take a hand since there's nothing else to do."

So rapid were the young man's movements that Isaac, not so impetuous, was left standing in the same spot looking at the chair now standing composedly on its four legs for a minute after Harry had taken his place at the card-table. Isaac was astonished, but he was relieved as well. He came back slowly to the corner of the settle, looking at his pipe with an air of remonstrance, but gradually feeling his cares relax, and the pleasure of coming back to the company. "I'm bound to say," was his first utterance, as he put himself once more into the corner and stretched his legs in front of the fire, "as people

couldn't behave more honourable. I never expected to get my own place again."

"Sommat oop?" asked his neighbour on the settle, with a thrust of his elbow towards Harry. Isaac thrust up his shoulders to his ears, and shook his head.

"There's always summat oop," said Isaac, oracularly, "as long as there's lads at home,"

"And that's true," said another, who took the opportunity to illustrate the statement by a long and tedious story, which had been simmering in him all the evening. After this the place relapsed into its usual aspect. The two or three men about the fire basking in the warmth listened with a mild interest to the slow current of the tale, and supplemented it by anecdotes of their own of a like tedious and inconsequent kind. But nobody was bored; the talkers were pleased with themselves, and the listeners did their part very steadily, not troubled by any idea of dulness. Isaac, sitting well up in his corner, so warm that his corduroy almost burned him when he laid his hand accidentally upon it, felt for his part that if it had not been well understood to be the very doorway and vestibule of another place, the parlour of the "Red Lion" would

be a kind of little Paradise. Perhaps it was the terribly wicked and risky character of the enjoyment which gave its humdrum drowsiness so great a charm. As the evening got on the drowse increased ; one or two even fell half asleep in their seats, and a reflective air stole on the "coompany." The gentleman who had the ear of the house prosed on, taking a minute's rest between every two words ; but nobody budged. An alarmed thought of the missis did indeed now and then come over Isaac's mind, but he was too tranquil, too comfortable, too warm to take such a decisive step as would be necessary to raise himself from the embrace of the settle and get under weigh. All this time, however, there was a little stir at the card-table, which pleased the audience round. When there was any special success, they would pause in their anecdotes and listen, with drowsy smiles. This gave a sort of rollicking character, which would otherwise have been wanting to it, to the placid gaiety. One of the quiet drinkers now and then nudged his neighbour, and asked him what he thought the stakes were. "As much as would be a fortin for you or me," Isaac said, and there was a flutter of respectful admiration. Perhaps Isaac knew that

he was exaggerating. He did it for the honour of the family, of which he was through his master a kind of relation. It was in character with the wild immorality of an evening in the Red Lion that the young men should be playing for high stakes ; and this idea made the others enjoy themselves still more. When they came out, the misty whiteness of the atmosphere had cleared off a little, and consolidated itself into dark shadows in all the corners, and a flood of faint moonlight dimly marking the gray fells and the dark treeless country, with its dim lines of dykes and square grey limestone houses. Harry Joscelyn was one of the last to leave ; he stood upon the bridge for some time talking with young Selwyn, with whom he had been playing. Isaac thought it was for his own confusion that the young man lingered. The sentiments likely to be entertained by the Missis became more and more clear to Isaac with every step he took after he was forced to get up from his comfortable corner in the settle. But he was still warm without and within, his corduroys keeping the heat of the fire even to the touch after their long baking, and his heart kept up by the strengthened influence of all that he had swallowed. It confused his head a little too,

making it drowsy but kindly. It was through a faint little steam as of "summat" warm, dispensing its odours liberally into the air, that he seemed in imagination to see his own door, and the wrathful countenance that would look out from it; but the cold outside made this picture a great deal clearer by degrees, though it did not clear his faculties. His partial obfuscation however did not make him less sensible of his duty towards his master's godson. He had sacrificed himself, he had incurred all those expressions of the missis's feelings, which were already prophetically sounding in his ears, for Harry's sake—and he could not go away now without another word. "As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," he said to himself, when the others went clattering over the bridge and along the branching ways with their heavy boots, almost all of them feeling a good deal of alarm about the sentiments of the missis; but as Isaac lingered in the cold moonlight kicking his heels, the uneasiness grew with every moment that passed. She would hear old Jack Smethurst stumble down the way to his cottage, and she would prepare a still sharper rod in pickle for Isaac later still. "As well be hanged for a sheep as for a

lamb," he repeated to himself. How those young fellows did talk! and what could they have to talk about after spending all the blessed night playing their games. Ah! devil's books those cards were, beguiling folks on and on. Isaac fell half asleep, leaning against a corner in the shadow of the "Red Lion." The lights were already out in that deserted place. There would be no gleam from the window to keep him a little cheery as he plodded down the waterside. And what a clatter these young fellows made! What could they have to talk about? He leaned against the wall and let his head droop on his breast, and for a minute or two Isaac was blissfully unconscious of everything; but at the end of that time he came to himself suddenly, and felt that his corduroys had got quite cold, and that it was very chilly, that the young men were still talking, and that he had begun to shiver. It was cruelty to keep him there, kicking his heels. All the village seemed so still, no lights anywhere, and the landlord of the "Red Lion" turning the key in the door before he mounted up the creaking stairs to bed. The creaking of these stairs went to Isaac's heart, and the idea of being up later than the landlord of the tavern, the abode

of dissipation, of which the whole valley entertained a wholesome distrust—to be out too, at that terrible hour, and still to have a mile to walk, and a talk at the end of it, all for one unruly young fellow that would stand and jabber there with young Selwyn, whom he could see quite easily to-morrow if he pleased. "He's drunk, that's it," Isaac, half asleep, chilled, frightened, and remorseful, and glad to think the worst he could of Mr. Harry, said to himself. And then there was an unexpected aggravation; all at once when he had got his back comfortable at a new angle of the wall, lo! the two shook hands, and went off in a moment, one to the right hand, the other to the left, without any warning to Isaac. He had to pull himself up with a start, and the trouble he had to get himself into motion was as great as if he had been a cranky steam-engine, one of those things (he reflected, muddled, but all the more ingenious) where you have to turn a wheel here and touch a spring there—while all the while Mr. Harry's steps were audible, young and light, skimming along the road ahead of him. He had to call after him, waking all the echoes, and making the most portentous noise as he lumbered along in his heavy boots, doing what

he could to run. Luckily Harry heard him and stopped, just as he came to the cross roads. "Who is that calling me?" he said.

"It's me, Mr. Harry. Lord bless ye, stop a moment. I've got a—word to say—Mr. Harry," cried Isaac, panting. "Is that a way to keep your friends easy in their minds, to stand aw that time i' the' dark at the dead hour o' th' night, jabbering nonsense with another as ill as yourself? How are ye to give an account for this night, if there were no more? and leading others into an ill gate. What would t' auld maister say, —or your missis if ye'd got a missis?"

"Poor old Isaac!" said Harry, laughing; "so that's what you're thinking of. I haven't got a missis, I am thankful. It is you that have got to be lectured to-night. Tell her it was all my fault."

Isaac seemed to take no notice of this contemptuous recommendation. He stuck himself against the wall that bordered the road, as a precautionary measure against fatigue and sleep, and the effect of the not extravagant potations in which he had been indulging. "I want to say—a serious word to ye. I have got something to say."

"Then say it and make haste,' Harry cried, "don't you feel how cold it is, and the moon will set directly? I want to get home to bed."

"Oh-h," cried old Isaac: "as if I wasn't colder and worrider than the like of you; and more burdened with a nervousness—like—what you might call a nervousness for—the walk at the dead o' t'night and sich like. But I've got a word to say. Mr. Harry, you'll no go near t'auld master? Try anybody but him. I've set my heart on't that you should get his money at the end, and so you will if you'll hev patience, just hev a little patience; but don't ye go asking money of him now; don't you do it, Mr. Harry, and spoil aw—"

"You old ——," here Harry paused; "is this all you stopped me for? Well, you mean well, Isaac. Go home to bed, and let's hope the missis will not tear all the hair out of your head."

"I scorn aw that," said Isaac with a wave of his hand, though his teeth chattered. "I winna take the trouble to give it a denial; nay, nay, settle your ain affairs atween you and her when ye hev got a missis o' your ain; I can manage mine," he said with a little rueful sigh and

contraction of his breast. He thought he could see her looking out from the cottage door, and his very soul trembled. "Me, I can manage mine," he repeated, then added, "but, Mr. Harry, come back to the right question. Hev a little patience; if it was to get me a beatin' (and she has not the strength for that) I must say it afore we part. Let him be; hev a little patience. If it was my last breath I could give you no different advice."

Harry paused a moment between offence and gratitude. Then he suddenly gripped Isaac's hand, "You mean me well," he said, "and I'll take your advice, Isaac. Here, lad, you've always been a friend, wish me good luck and good-night."

"And that I do from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Harry. But gang no more to the 'Red Lion;' it leads you into many a temptation. Good luck, to ye, my young gentleman, wherever you may go—so long as you're no going to Wyburgh to fright t'auld master out of his wits."

"And good night, Isaac, and I wish you well through with the missis," cried Harry with a laugh, as he went on waving his hand. Isaac stood for a moment looking after him as his

alert young figure went off into the distance; then he sighed a sigh, "I wish you well, my lad, if I should never see you again," he said, with a perturbation which referred to his own troubled mind rather than Harry's prospects; and so turned his face, alarmed yet sustained by conscious virtue, to his own house.

CHAPTER V.

OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

THE moon was getting low, and threw a level and somewhat sinister light into the lower windows of the White House as Harry came within sight of home. In that bare country, with so few trees to break the light, all the changes in the heavens had a direct influence upon the earth, darkening and lightening it with instantaneous sympathy, such as is not felt in regions less exposed. This special aspect of the light reflecting itself feebly in the lower windows, gave the house the appearance of wearing, as a human countenance sometimes does, a pale and unpleasant smile upon its lips, in which the rest of the face was not involved. The young man did not pay any attention to this at the moment, but when he thought after-

wards of the aspect of the place, this was the look that occurred to him; a pale smile, full of mocking and derision; the smile of one cognizant of unknown evil which was about to overwhelm an unsuspecting victim, and taking pleasure in it.

He went up quite calmly to the door. On ordinary occasions it was not necessary for Harry even to knock; his mother, who disapproved as much of the "Red Lion" as Isaac Oliver himself, was always on the watch, stealing down through the dark house in noiseless slippers to let him in, lest he should disturb his father and a quarrel should ensue. Very often, Harry was aware, she was at the window looking out for him, sitting alone in the darkness waiting till she heard his step. He was aware that one way or another she was always on the watch. This, however, did not disturb him, or dispose him to give up his own way of spending the evening. He was not a bad son—certainly he had not the least intention of being so: but that he should change his habits, or do anything he wished not to do, because of his mother's little feeble anxieties, was a thing which had not occurred to him. All the family knew that she was given to "making a fuss." Harry supposed she liked

to sit up and watch for him. Why should she do it if she didn't like it? it would be a great deal easier to let him have the key, or tell a servant to sit up. But she liked it; she liked to wait for him at the window, and start up as soon as she heard any sound. Women do; or so, at least, Harry supposed. Joan, to be sure, had never shown the least inclination to do this; but then, one of Joan's chief distinctions was that she was but little of a woman at all. He came up to the door as usual and stood there for a moment without excitement, listening for the little stir within, which had never failed him, the soft, hesitating, noiseless step, the little sweep of the dress. He stood for a minute looking about him; the moon was quite low in the sky, throwing his shadow before him upon the door, so black and close to him that he was startled for a moment as if it had been a ruffian facing him, and shining chilly, with that sinister look which he had already remarked, in the parlour window. That was his mother's post when she watched, looking out for him; he had seen the bit of the shutter open, night after night, just enough to see through without being herself perceived, if (an unlikely hypothesis), anyone but Harry should pass that

way. But the shutter was closed to-night, and did its share of reflection, sending out a dull glimmer from its dark paint. All was perfectly silent in the house.

He could not think what had happened. He walked back a little and contemplated the place, which now looked as if a hood had been drawn over the upper part, leaving that uncomfortable light below. Now that he was standing still, Harry felt the chill of the night air, which had been agreeable to him before. He began to stamp with his feet to keep them warm, and to attract, if possible, the notice of his mother. What did she mean by paying no attention? She had always heard him before he came near the house, always been ready for him before he reached the door. If she had not accustomed him to this, Harry thought, he would have found some other way of getting admission, though he scarcely knew how; and he grew impatient, and very much annoyed and angry with her. To keep him waiting out here at midnight in the cold; it was out of the question! what could she be thinking of? At the same time, he did not want to rouse his father, and run the risk of another encounter. To meet a woman's

reproaches, who is silenced if you speak a little loud, and is pretty sure to cry at the end, is one thing—but to meet a furious man is quite another. The first risk was not worth taking the trouble to avoid, but Harry felt that it was certainly wiser to keep clear of the other. He had no desire, accordingly, to arouse the house; but at the same time, to be left standing there, chilled to the bone, was out of the question. After he had walked about for a time, impatiently, but with some precaution, he went so far as to knock at the door. There was no bell, nor if there had been one would he have ventured to ring it, for a bell is alarming, pealing into the silence of a shut up house. His soft knocking, however, did no more good than his other attempts to make himself heard. What could it mean? He got colder and colder externally, while within him his temper kindled. What did *she* mean by leaving him in the lurch? If a mother was good for anything, surely it was to keep her son out of trouble, to shield him from another quarrel. She made fuss enough about the quarrel when it occurred, but now she was allowing things to take their chance, letting that happen as ill-luck directed, nay, bringing the

quarrel on, her son felt, indignantly; for if she had never made a practice of opening to him, probably he would not have made a practice of going out, and would not have exposed himself to the storm, which was sure to come now. The moonlight stole away by degrees even from the lower windows, putting out one reflection after another, and disappearing at last with a sinister twinkle, as if of triumph. Though the moonlight had seemed the quintessence of cold and dreariness, yet the blackness of night seemed still colder and drearier after it was gone. He seemed to have been hours standing before that door: and it was out of the question! he would not bear it any longer, happen what might. He began to knock loudly, filling all the dreary echoes with sound; but still nobody stirred in the house.

He had not carried this on for above a minute, however, when a faint something seemed to stir in the darkness behind. There was the faint hiss of a "Hist!" and, he thought, his own name. He turned round to see if perhaps his mother had chosen this time to open the back-door instead of the front, and with a muttered denunciation of her caprice took his way to the supposed opening. It was so dark now that

he stumbled even round those corners which were so well known to him. He was relieved, yet it made him angry to be obliged to have recourse to a back way. Could anything be more foolish, he thought, than to change thus without cause or warning?

"Where are you? What's the matter that I can't come in as usual?" he said, crossly, as he groped his way among tubs and piles of wood.

"Hush!" said some one, "hush, for heaven's sake!"

It was not his mother's voice. And there, in the corner among the washhouses and other offices, he saw a glimmer of something white.

"Good Lord! Joan! what's the matter with my mother?" he cried.

"Hush! Nothing's the matter with mother; father's got her locked up, that is all; and it's all your fault. Come on, and hold your tongue now you are here."

It was a sort of little shed in which she stood, and he could see nothing but the whiteness of her nightdress, over which she had thrown a cloak.

"Things have gone just as wrong as can be," she said; "warm your hands at the copper, you'll

not find a fire indoors. He's cracked, I think; and so are you too, for ever running to that 'Red Lion.' What is there that's so entertaining? If there's any fun to be had I'd like to go too."

"There's no fun—that you could understand," said Harry

Joan laughed; she stood close to the copper in the dark, warming herself, and so did he. It was a kind of little excitement to her, she who had so few excitements, to have had to get up, as she expressed it, in the middle of the night to let her brother in. And though she was sagacious enough not to put much confidence in the "fun" of the "Red Lion," still it represented jollity and wildness to her as well as to Isaac Oliver. She laughed.

"Oh, you're very grand, I know; women folk can't understand, you are cleverer than we are. But I wonder you can be so easy pleased; if young Selby and Jim Salkeld, and the common men of the village, are very entertaining at the 'Red Lion,' it's more than they are in any other place."

"What do you know about it?" cried Harry.

She laughed again, which was exasperating.

Young men take nothing more amiss than an impertinent woman's doubts as to the brilliancy of the entertainment in those haunts which are sacred to their own special enjoyment. He knew very well at bottom that the "Red Lion" was as dull as ditchwater; but nothing would have made him confess it; where else, he said to himself, had he to go?

"You had better mind your own concerns," he said, "I'll get my amusement my own way. Has there been a row that mother's not here? I don't mean to say that I am not obliged to you, Joan, for getting out of bed to let me in. By Jove, if I had been shut out I know what I'd have done! Was there a great row?"

"What would you have done?" said Joan, still half laughing; then she started and with a little cry, said, "What's that?"

"What's what? I'll tell you this, I should never have crossed the door again in daylight, be sure of that, that was shut to me in the night."

Before he had finished this speech, Joan clutched him by the arm.

"Don't you hear something?" she said, "come in, come in, don't lose a minute. What if he

should lock the kitchen door? Harry, promise me you'll not stop to say a word, but run up to your bed."

She was hurrying while she spoke, through the series of outbuildings, dragging him with her, breathless, and speaking in gasps. But as they went on from one to another there could be no longer any doubt as to what had happened. The kitchen door, which opened from these offices, was shut with a loud jar, and the key turned.

"I dunno' who's out and about at this hour of the night," Joscelyn was heard within, "but whoever it is they'll stay there: some o' the women out like the cats, dash them, or may be a good-for-nothing lad. I'll teach them what it is to roam the country o' nights, You'll stay there whoever you are."

Joan lost all her self-command in the emergency. She dropped Harry's hand and threw herself against the door.

"Oh, father, father, open! do you hear me? It's me, Joan. Open! will you let me bide out in the cold, in the dead of night? Father! let me in, let me in! you wouldn't have the heart to shut me out all night. It's me, *me*, Joan!"

There was no reply; his steps were heard going away mounting the stairs, and a faint outcry in the distance as of the mother weeping and protesting. Joan, who was a very simple person, though so self-commanded in emergencies which her mother could not face, was altogether taken by surprise by this. She flung herself against the door with a burst of weeping.

"Oh, open, open!" she said, beating upon it with her hands. Then she called out the names of the servants one after another. "I'll not be left here all the night; open, open! do you hear! I'll not be left here all the night. I'll die if I am left out in the dark. I'll not be left!" she cried with a shriek.

Harry was silenced by this loud and sudden passion so close to him. It alarmed him, for Joan was the impersonation of strength and calm; but the situation was uncomfortable enough, however it could be taken. The consciousness that he had some one else to think for, some one who for the present had lost her head, and all power to think for herself, changed his own position. He caught his sister by the arm.

"Don't make such a row," he said, "Joan, you! that was always against a fuss."

"Oh," cried Joan half wild, "did I ever think that I'd be shut out like a bad woman out of the house at the dead of night—me! that was always the most respectable, that never stirred a step even in the evening times, or said a word to a man. Open! it isn't the cold, it's the character: me! me!"

But all her beating and knocking, and all her prayers were in vain. The maids slept soundly, all but one trembling girl who heard the voice without knowing whose it was, and dared not get up to see what was the matter, especially as she heard mysterious steps going up and down stairs. And the mistress of the house sobbed in her chamber in the dark, wringing her hands. She had come almost to the length of personal conflict with her husband for the first time in her life; but poor Mrs. Joscelyn even in her despair was no sort of match for the man who lifted her, swearing and laughing, into her bed, and locked the door upon her when he went downstairs. He came up and fiercely ordered her to be silent.

"Dash you, hold your blanked tongue. I've taken it into my own hands, and if you venture to interfere I'll pitch you out of window as soon as

look at you," he said, "a deal sooner for that matter—for you're not tempting to look at, you dashed white-faced——"

"Yes, do," she cried, "throw me out of the window, throw me out to my children. I'd rather be dead with my children than living here." And she rushed to the window and threw it open; but he caught her before she could throw herself out, and perhaps, poor woman, she would not have thrown herself out; for "I dare not" very often waits upon "I would" in such circumstances. He carried her back crying and struggling to her bed. Though he had not hesitated to turn the key upon his son and daughter, he had no desire to have it whispered in the country side that his wife had thrown herself out of window, because of his cruelty; but he could not resist giving her a shake as he threw her upon her bed.

"I'd never have had any fuss in my family if it hadn't been for you; just you budge at your peril," he said, threatening her with his fist. And there she lay with the cry of her daughter in her ears, and the sound of the knocking that seemed to be upon her heart. To tell the truth she was not very anxious about Joan. Joan

would have a bad cold, that would be all the damage she would take; but Harry, Harry! what would Harry do?

When Joan had beat the door and her knuckles almost to a jelly, she came to a sudden pause. In a moment her mood changed; her passion wrought itself out almost as suddenly as it began.

"Well, if I can't have the door opened I'd best give up trying," she said all at once. Her hands were fatigued with knocking, and her feet with kicking. She was hoarse, and her eyes ached with the hot tears that had poured from them. She came to herself with a sudden sense of shame—she who was so strenuous in her opposition to a fuss. She had no sense of cold now, her shawl hung off her shoulders with the fervour of her efforts. "My word, but I'll give it to those lasses," was the next thing Joan said: and then she laughed at herself to carry off her sense of shame.

"We're both in the same box, Harry," she said, "well! two together isn't so bad as one alone; come back to the washhouse. I'm glad I told them to light that copper—if it wasn't a providence! we'll sit us down there and keep

warm ; and don't you take on, my lad. It's not so very long to day."

When she recovered, however, it was Harry's turn. He followed her back to the copper without a word. He even pulled the bench on which the tubs stood close to that centre of warmth for her, and got her something on which to put her feet. By this time a certain pleasure in the novelty of the situation had arisen in Joan's mind. "My word, I made a fine noise. Mother will be in a terrible way, that's the worst of it. As for father I'll pay him out. Don't you be afraid; he'll repent the night he meddled with Joan; and I'll give it to the maids. Just as likely as not he's taken away the key; but bless us all, what's the good of being a woman if you can't find out a way? I'd have done it if he'd stood over me with a drawn sword. But, Harry, you never speak a word. Are you cold? come and sit here by me on the warmest side. 'Twill be as cosy here as if you were in a pie; and I'll give you a bit of my shawl. Come, lad! pluck up a heart: I've nigh cried my eyes out; but that does no good. I can't see you, Harry; but I know you're down, though I can't see."

"Down!" he said, "Can a fellow be anything

but down with a raging wild beast for a father, and shut out of every shelter through a cold spring night."

"That's very true," said Joan, "and I'm no example, as you've seen; but still I'm in the same box if that's any consolation."

"No, it is no consolation," said Harry; "it makes it worse; for if you are here perishing of cold it's all on my account."

"I'm not perishing of cold. I'm as hearty as a cricket. If he thinks he'll break my spirit he's much mistaken; and that's all about it. It did touch me the first minute. I feel that I was just a big baby. But after all, Harry, if you will stay out till all the hours of the night, and go to that 'Red Lion,' which is known to have ruined many a lad ——"

"Oh, hold your tongue about the 'Red Lion'!— you are as bad as old Isaac. Where am I to go?"

"What's to prevent you biding at home?" said Joan. "Dear me, you're not such a deal better than I am, Harry Joscelyn. Where do I ever go? I've been as young as you once upon a time, and what diversion was ever given to me? and I'm not to say so dreadful old yet. Can you not

put up for a week with what I have put up with all my life ?”

“ You don’t understand—it’s quite different,” said Harry, hotly ; “ you’re a woman, you’re an old—Good Lord, can’t you see the difference ? Where should you be but at home ? but what would you have *me* do, stuck between two women and that—that father of mine ?— ” Harry here menaced the dark world with his fist, and burst, in his turn, into an outery of passion. “ I’ll neither sleep under his roof nor call him father, nor reckon myself to belong to him more ! You hear what I say, Joan ; you can bear witness. Not if I to were starve ; not if I were to die ; not if I were to cadge about the streets !—White House has seen the last of me. You can tell my mother I think upon her : but she must not expect ever to see me again.”

“ Tut, tut,” said Joan, tranquilly ; “ to be sure you must have your fling. Ay, ay, say away, my lad ; it’s always a relief : and we’ll not keep you to it when you come to yourself.”

“ That’s well for you, Joan,” said her brother ; “ but for me, I don’t mean to come to myself. He’s done it, I can tell you. What did he ever do for me ? but if he had been the best father in

the world now he's made an end of it. Am I to be treated like this, home on a visit and I cannot put my affairs before him, and ask for my share to buy me into the business, but I'm met with abuse: and when I go out for a little peace the door's shut upon me. You can do what you please, but I'll not stand it. We've all lived a wretched life, but I'll make an end of it. Don't you think it's all a flash-in-the-pan, and that I don't mean what I say."

"Well, well, lad—if it keeps your spirits up a bit. Are you not sleepy? Let's make the best of it, Harry: after all it's but one night. Though this is not to call an easy seat. I'm that sleepy I shall go off, I know I shall. If you see me tumbling be sure you catch me. I cannot keep awake another minute. Good night, lad, good night."

This was half real, on Joan's part, and half put on to calm her brother down; but in that part of her intention she was not very successful. After a while she really did as she had threatened, and fell into a sound, if uneasy, sleep. But Harry had no inclination that way. He sat and pondered over all his wrongs, and as he mused the fire burned. What was home to him?—nothing. A place where there was no peace—a pandemonium

—and when there was either quarrelling or dullness—dullness beyond description; either a fight with his father or a drowse by his mother's side—that was all the comfort he had of his home. And after all, when he put the question to himself, and nobody else interfered, he was obliged to allow that the entertainment at the "Red Lion" was not of a very exciting character. There was not much in that to make up for the want of everything else. He sat upon the edge of the copper dangling his legs, and, notwithstanding that warmth, the chill of the night got into his heart. He had no overcoat, as his mother had remembered, when he went out; and as the slow moments passed on, the night became intolerable to Harry, and the sense that his enemy, his father, was chuckling in the warmth upstairs over his outcast condition, distracted him with impotent rage. Never again would he subject himself to such a shame. He clenched his fist and made a vow within himself, while Joan, leaning her head against him, slumbered uneasily. After a while Joan had a little shock in her sleep, half woke, and felt her pillow displaced, and dreaming, not knowing where she was, threw herself back against the copper and settled down somehow again. She

dreamt there had been an earthquake, and that the copper itself was a volcano and had made an eruption and tumbled down upon her, catching her fast by the feet. A little after, poor Mrs. Joscelyn, lying awake crying silently and saying her prayers over and over again, heard a handful of gravel flung violently against her window and the sound of footsteps. What did it mean? The tyrant had gone to sleep a few minutes before, and he slept heavily. She crept out of bed with a sinking heart, and after a great deal of alarmed searching found the keys, of her own room first, and then of the doors below. She did not even turn to find something to cover her, but fled downstairs, like a ghost, with her naked feet and a wild flutter in her heart. When she made her way with some difficulty to the place where her children had found refuge, she came just in time to deliver Joan, who had almost broken her neck in her struggles to get out of the way of the earthquake, and was lying, with her head back and her mouth open, among the tubs. Though she was conscious of being in some convulsion of nature it was not easy to wake Joan, and there was no one else to be seen. Mrs. Joscelyn, with her candle in her hand, went searching into every

corner while her daughter picked herself up. "Harry," she cried, "Harry! oh where is my boy?" There was not a trace of him about; not even an impromptu couch, like Joan's, made up of benches and washing tubs. The mother flitted about into all the offices, while Joan roused herself with many yawns, rubbing her stiff neck and knotting up her straggling locks, and gathering her shawl round her shoulders. "Oh that copper," Joan was saying, "it's been the saving of my life."

"But where is my boy? Oh! Joan, what have you done with him? Where is my boy?"

"I have not got him in my pocket," Joan said, with a sleepy smile. Then as she roused herself quite up, "To be sure, mother, the lad's not a fool though we give him the credit of it. He's gone back to his blessed 'Red Lion,' and is safe in his bed, as I would like to be. And if I had let him alone and not poked in where I wasn't wanted, there's where he would have been from the first. You see that's just your way. I have a little bit of it in me, if not much; and, instead of letting him be, I must meddle. But he's safe in his bed at the 'Red Lion;' and you'd better go

back to yours, and let me go to mine, and make the best of a bad night."

"I cannot think he has gone to the 'Red Lion,'" said Mrs. Joscelyn, standing in her white night-dress, with her glaring candle, against the great darkness of the night in the doorway, and investigating the gloom by that poor assistance with her anxious eyes.

"Then where else would he go to?" Joan said.

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT WALK.

THE moon had set when Harry Joscelyn left the White House; and the night was very dark, as it is so often after the setting of the moon. The sky was cloudy, and scarcely a star was visible. The wind blew cold in his face when he got beyond the shelter of the walls. He looked up at the house as he passed it with a sensation of rage and contempt which it is only possible to reach when the object we thus hate and despise is one that ought to be beloved. He lifted a handful of gravel and threw it violently at his mother's window. There was no softening of feeling, no wish to say a farewell, even if an angry one in this. It was done in boyish rage, with a simple desire to strike. He was glad to think the stones struck sharply, and

might, perhaps, have broken a pane and fallen like shot upon the floor. This was what he would have wished. When he had discharged that parting volley, he pulled down his hat over his ears, and put up his coat-collar. It was all he could do against the wind, which blew through and through him. Not even an overcoat! They were determined that he should have nothing; that he should be expelled without even the poorest covering; that he should be exposed to everything dangerous, everything disagreeable. To be sure, that was what they wanted! Revenge filled the young fellow's heart as he went along in the dark, shivering at first, till his rapid progress set his blood in motion. Not only without a home, without a roof to shelter him, or a bed to lie upon, but without even a coat. He turned his back upon his father's house with a bitterness that was indescribable. He could remember the time when it was delightful to him to go home; but that was long ago, when he was a boy and knew no better. Even then, what had his father been to him? a terror even in his lighter moods, which might turn into fury at any moment. His mother? oh, his mother had been kind enough, poor soul! For a woman

she had done what she could ; but at the best what could a woman do ? Poor thing ! yes she had been kind. But it is very difficult for the young to see anyone, even when dear to them, systematically undervalued without getting to share the sentiment in one shape or another. Sometimes it rouses a generous mind to hot partizanship ; but Harry had never got that length. He had been indignant sometimes and conscious, with a little pride, that he was the one who stood up for his mother—but he had not gone further. And now he could not help despising her as everybody else did. Just when it was essential she should stand by him, she had failed him. Call this the consequence of force which she could not resist, of natural bodily weakness—all that was very well to say ; but a mother worth anything will never run the risk of bodily force in such an emergency. She will find some way of getting out of it. She will stand by her son when he needs her, whatever happens. And Harry's mother had not done so—just at the critical moment when he had been driven wild by opposition, when his future career had been to all appearance cut short and his path shut in before him, she had failed him !

She was as weak as water ; there was no faith to be put in her. A woman like that, Harry reflected, is almost as bad as if she were not a good woman. Oh, yes ; she was a good woman ! but what advantage was it to anyone ? What did it matter being good if you were of no use to those belonging to you ? Being good just for yourself, selfishly, that was a poor sort of business. For her children she was no good. What had she ever done for any of them ? Made a fuss, as Joan said. She was very good at doing that, was mother ! But what more ? These were the angry thoughts that were surging through his mind as he turned his back upon his home. His father's image swept across him now and then, raising his angry despair into momentary rage ; but it was not his father, who had always been hard upon him, but his mother, who had always been so tender to him, whom Harry assailed with all these bitter thoughts. In her silly dislike to the only poor little amusement he had, she had turned against him at the decisive moment. It was just like a woman ! Because he would not tie himself to her apron-strings ; because he would not spend his evenings sitting with her and Joan—a pretty

sort of position for a young man, Harry said to himself, with a curl of his lip.

He went on shivering, straight before him as he happened to have turned his face when he came round the corner of the house. He was not aware that there was more choice in it than this, though all the while there was a dormant intention in his mind of going to Wyburgh after all, and trying, one last effort, what Uncle Henry would do for him. Uncle Henry had been kind to him, as kind as he knew how. He was only an old bachelor, not much good, a selfish old fellow, thinking most of his own comfort; but still he had been kind; and perhaps if he knew fully the state of the case, and how the people at White House had treated his pupil and godson— This was lying underneath as it were the current of Harry's thoughts, and turned over and came uppermost for a moment now and then; but it did not become at all a principal idea until he had walked a long way, and had got warm with walking, and the sense of absolute misery, physical and mental, had been slightly modified. At first he kept to the side of the Fells, which was rough walking, and where now and then there was a dyke to jump over or a beck to cross; but by and

by got down to the high road, almost groping the way with his feet, if not with his hands, so black lay the night over the irregular broken ground. He knew the road, every inch, he would have said ; but when that darkness comes down like a pall, confounding everything in one gloom, there is little advantage in knowledge. Sometimes he found himself right up against the grey uncemented stones of a dyke before he was aware of any obstacle, and sometimes had almost plunged into an invisible hill-side stream, before the little warning trickle it made among the stones caught his ear. By the side of one of these little streams he made his way to the road, and there for the first time asked himself where he was going. What a strange walk it was, all blank about him, sometimes a lonely tree rustling, betraying itself in the dark by the wind in its spare branches, sometimes a cottage suggested on the roadside, or away among the fields, by the cry of a child or the bark of a dog. He knew he had passed through the first hamlet on his way, because the dogs all woke at the unusual sound of a footstep, and barked at him lustily. He was not a youth of much imagination, and yet this incident had the most curious effect upon him. He was more startled, more

shocked and annoyed by it than by anything else that had happened to him. The very dogs! was he already to them a tramp, a wandering vagrant? At the very end of the "town" some one opened a window, and Harry heard a querulous question, not addressed to himself, but to some one inside, "Wha's that wandering on the road in the dead o' the night?" Harry slunk by, trying to keep his steps from making so much noise. A sense of disreputableness suddenly came over him, a recollection of what people would think. Nobody would believe he had been turned out of his home for no fault of his. And then in the midst of his fury and desire for vengeance, there suddenly came over Harry that family pride which so seldom abandons a North-countryman. Was he going to let everybody know what disgrace there was in the White House, and how his father had turned him out of doors? Were all the tongues in the country-side to be set wagging on this subject? The Joscelyns—people so well known! Harry felt as if some one had struck him sharply with his hand in the darkness. It would be all over the country in twenty-four hours. Joscelyn of White House had turned his youngest son out of doors. There was no second

family of the name to confuse gossip. Harry felt as if the barking of the dogs was but a foretaste of what was going to happen to him. He felt as if some one had grasped him, choked him, tried to strangle him in the dark.

Fortunately Wyburgh by this time showed, a long way off with its little lights twinkling. They were but four little rustic lights, not many of them—for when the moon shone the corporation felt itself at liberty to dispense with lamps; and but for the lights at the railway-station, and two or three which were indispensable, the little town would have been invisible in the darkness, like those sleeping villages which Harry had stumbled through almost without knowing. When he caught sight of the first of these lights, it gave him a keen pleasure; it seemed to deliver him from that world of blackness in which the only conscious and living thing was himself and the sea of thoughts which surged up and down within him, one wave sweeping over another, in a confusion and tumult indescribable. Harry's soul caught at the glow of that tall solitary lamp, the first which marked the line of the railway, as at a guiding light directing him into a known country, to solid ground and a familiar shore. The darkness and the little inward

world of thought were alike strange to him, and he had no guide to direct him through them; but now here was "kent ground," a place which would be visible, where the dogs would not bark at him in the dark, where there were all the safeguards of an inhabited place. He was relieved beyond measure when he saw the lights, and said to himself what they were. That was the tall light on the line, that other lower one the lamp at the station, that the faint little flare seen over the housetops of the market square, and yonder the well-known lamp at the corner, which he had seen lit so often as he left the Grammar-school. It made his heart light to count them at a distance. But when he got to the outskirts of the town he was less happy. It was still quite dark, between three and four o'clock, and he could not go to Uncle Harry's, or to any other house in which he was known at such an hour. Nobody was stirring in Wyburgh, nor would be for hours yet. As he went into the silent streets the sense of his desolate position came over him more strongly than ever. All the houses were shut up and silent, blinds drawn over the windows, feeble lamps burning here and there like night-lights in a sick-chamber, the whole place breathing low

and noiselessly in its sleep. He met a policeman, the only one, making his rounds with steady tramp, and the policeman looked at Harry with suspicion, throwing the light of his dark lantern upon him as he passed. He knew John Armstrong very well, and had played him many a trick as a schoolboy ; but he shrank from making himself known now ; and John looked with suspicion at the wayfarer, without even an overcoat, buttoned up to the neck, and with his hat drawn over his eyes, who thus invaded the town in the middle of the night. Harry knew that he was but a tramp, all the more dangerous because better dressed than usual, in John's eyes. He felt the light of the lantern come after him, making a long trail of light upon the pavement. And he did not know where to go. If he went wandering about, which was the only thing he could think of, no doubt he would meet John Armstrong again, and almost certainly be questioned as to what he was doing, and who he was. And then the story would run over Wyburgh, how young Harry Joscelyn, one of the Joscelyns of the White House, had come in to Wyburgh before four o'clock in the morning, walking like a vagrant, and was recognized by the policeman, roaming about the street without

any place to go to. He might almost be taken up as a rogue and vagabond, Harry thought, with that exaggeration which misfortune delights in. If he were called upon to give an account of himself he could not do it, nor had he any place to go to, any home waiting for him. The Wyburgh folk might form their own conclusions, and so they would, could anyone doubt.

He walked straight through the town to the other end of it, as if he were going on somewhere else, ashamed of himself, though he had nothing to be ashamed of, avoiding the spots of feeble light round the lamps, and walking as softly as he could not to make so much noise upon the pavement. He had not felt this so much in the country, in the darkness, but here, where everybody knew him, he became suddenly ashamed and afraid of being seen. When the clock struck it made him jump as if it had been some one calling his name. "Harry Joscelyn is roaming about the country without a home to go to;" did he think that was what it was going to say? Alas! it was but four o'clock that struck; four o'clock! the night seemed to have been already twelve hours long; and here were two hours more at the least that he must get through some-

how before he could hope that even Mrs. Eadia, Uncle Henry's old housekeeper, would be astir. He would not mind presenting himself to her; and the thought of the kind unquestioning welcome she would give, the cheerful fire, the breakfast, the warm room in which he could sit down, gave him sudden encouragement. For it was very cold; those long, long hours of night, which pass so quickly in sleep, sliding out of consciousness altogether, how much goes on in them to those who are homeless! Harry had never thought of anything of the kind before; a night without rest, even, far less a night out of doors, had been unknown to him. The wretches who wander about the roads, and sleep under a hedge, and have no home, were out of his ken; they were poor wretches, and in all likelihood it was "their own fault." People would think the same of him. To be ashamed of the position in which you find yourself, and yet to be quite innocent, is a curious misery, but it is very poignant. He had done nothing wrong; but the light of John Armstrong's lantern made him shrink, and even those pale little prying lamps, each making a hole in the darkness. He went straight through Wyburgh, coming out at the further side. He

walked till he was quite clear of the houses, and then he turned and looked back upon the spots of light which had cheered him so much when he first caught sight of them. How cold it was! nobody would believe that a spring morning could be so cold. It was like December. There was the clock again, like some one shouting in his ear—but only sounding the half after four; would the night never come to an end? He walked up and down on this bit of quiet road, just outside the town, to keep himself warm, pausing now and then to lean upon the wall and look at the lights; though he dared not go back to them lest they should betray him to the gossips, yet it was a kind of consolation to look at them still. They delivered him a little from that close presence and wretched company of himself.

An early cart from one of the neighbouring farms with vegetables for the market, lumbering along the road just as the day began to break, was the next thing that disturbed him. He fled from that too, wondering what the carter would think to see him standing there like a ghost in the dim dawn—and got over the wall into a field, to be out of the way, yet could not help feeling, as he listened, holding his breath, to the

sound of the slow, jogging horses and the man's heavy tread, that the carter must have spied him, and must be peeping over the wall and wondering who he could be. By this time Harry had got to feel very like a criminal. He felt sure that everybody would think he was a criminal and had done something desperate, to see him there in this guise. And how he was to get courage to go back to Wyburgh again in full daylight, in the sight of everybody, and knock at his uncle's door, he did not know.

"Lord bless us! Master Harry!" the house-keeper cried. He came upon her suddenly as she opened the door to go out and feed her chickens, which was the first thing she did every morning. She was so scared that she let fall her apronful of seed, and held up her hands half to protect herself, for this worn, pale, wearied apparition, with coat-collar up to its ears, and hat drawn down over its brow, was like the ghost of Harry, not himself. "Lord bless us! Master Harry! it's never *you*?"

"It is me, though: and dreadfully tired, and so cold I don't know what to do with myself," said Harry, with chattering teeth. "Let me come in and look at a fire."

"Let you come in, my bonny boy! you shall come in, and welcome; and the kettle's on, and I'll soon make you some tea. Come into the kitchen, it's the warmest place. Bless the lad! What hour did ye start at to get here so early? or has anything happened? You've not come for the doctor? I'm that surprised you might blow me over with a puff of your breath."

"I shall not try," said Harry, recovering himself a little as he felt the warmth of the fire. "There's nothing wrong, Mrs. Eadie, they're all well enough; but I want to see Uncle Henry, and I'm going back to Liverpool to-day."

"Bless my heart! I thought you had come for a real holiday, and its no' above a week; but whisht! laddie, dinna chatter with your teeth like that; come nearer to the fire. Dear, dear me, but you must be cold; not a great-coat upon your back, nor a comforter, nor one thing to keep the heat in ye. I hope you havena' just gotten your death," cried the housekeeper, pouring the steaming water, which it was good even to see, into her teapot; and in her anxiety to get him a comfortable meal she forgot to ask any more questions.

Mrs. Eadie's help, who was a young girl, did

not live in the house, and her late arrival in the mornings was one of the grievances of the house-keeper's life. There was nobody, therefore, but this good woman, in whom Harry had perfect confidence, to witness his worn-out condition: and by-and-by he got thawed and comfortable. Once within this legitimate shelter too, his spirits came back to him. He forgot the painful miseries he had conjured up, or, at least, he did not forget them, but they went to his father's account to swell his wrath. There were still several hours to wait before he could see Uncle Henry, and Harry lay down upon the bed where he had slept when he was a schoolboy, and returned to common life and respectable usages through the medium of a long sleep. It was a sort of moral bath to him, restoring him to creditable ways. To think that he should have feared John Armstrong's lantern, and hid himself from the carter with his early vegetables! But all that, and a great deal more, went to his father's account. His rage revived as the misery of the night ended. For those latter hours he had been too much occupied by his personal feelings to dwell upon the cause of them; now that he was comfortable once more the insult and the cruelty that

had been inflicted upon him came back with double force. Turned from his father's door, the key turned upon him, the house he was born in shut up against him; himself disowned, like a beggar, left to wander where he pleased, to die on the moors, if he liked, to get his death, as Mrs. Eadie had suggested; and all this his father's doing! Harry clenched his fist with wild excitement, with a desire for vengeance which startled himself. He thought he would almost consent to have "got his death" if Joscelyn could be tried for manslaughter. He would have almost liked to punish, to convict his father by dying, so that the whole country might have pointed at him as the man who had killed his son. But then he reflected that probably his father would not care. "But I'll make him care," Harry said to himself. Few people venture to express such vindictiveness; but Harry Joscelyn's heart was full of it; it was natural to his race.

CHAPTER VII.

UNCLE HENRY.

MR. HENRY JOSCELYN came down stairs at nine o'clock to breakfast as he always did. No clock was ever more regular. He was not like the present family of Joscelyns. He had taken after his mother, who was the grandmother of Ralph Joscelyn of the White House. The family had been one of greater pretensions and more gentility in his day. The heir at that time was educated in Oxford, and the Joscelyns still belonged, though gradually falling away from it, to the higher level, and counted themselves county people. Henry had been sent off early to business; but he had never lost the sentiment which so often remains to an "old family" when more substantial possessions are gone. In the case of the present representative of the name

this sentiment was mere pride with a bitter edge to it, and resentful sense of downfall; but with Mr. Henry Joscelyn it was a real consciousness of superiority to the common persons round him. *Noblesse oblige* : perhaps he did not understand these words in their highest sense. The *noblesse* was small. And the behaviour it exacted was not of a princely or magnanimous character; but still there were many things which, being a Joscelyn, he felt it incumbent upon him both to do and not to do. He would not allow himself to drop. He looked with indignation and contempt at the rudeness and roughness of his nephew's house. Even what was best in it was, he felt, beneath him. He had never married at all, not feeling able to aspire to the only kind of wife he ever could have been content with; but to marry a parson's daughter was an expedient Henry Joscelyn would have scorned. It would have better befitted the reigning head of so good and old a race to have followed the example of King Cophetua—a beautiful beggar-maid is a possibility always, but an insipid parson's daughter! Mr. Henry Joscelyn had not cut his nephew—that would have been impossible too; but he looked upon

him with a fierce contempt; and though he allowed Mrs. Joscelyn to be "a worthy person," and probably quite good enough, nay, even too good, for Ralph Joscelyn as he was, still Mr. Henry could not meet her on grounds of equality—notwithstanding the fact that there was a baronet in her family, which at first had staggered him. It did not seem to him that these high claims of his were at all injured by the fact that he himself had been engaged in, and had made all his money by, trade. "I was a younger son," he would say, with a gentle shrug of his shoulders, and his godson Harry was also a younger son. Mr. Henry believed that there was a certain amount of self-sacrifice necessary in a family. If it was a right and good thing to keep it up, then it was quite right that the younger children should have their part in sustaining its honour. Its importance, its prestige, belonged to them as well as to the heir, and it was their interest as well as their duty to make an exertion and keep it up.

His own exertions had not succeeded badly; he had been able to come back to his own county, while he was still not an old man, and to settle

himself according to his pleasure. Now Mr. Henry's opinion was that you could not live absolutely in the country unless you had "a place" in the country, and all the consequence that brings. His notions, it will be seen, were a great deal higher than his real position; he thought of the Joscelyns as if they had been a ducal house. And without "a place" he considered a country life impossible. He did not choose to live in a small house in the shadow of a great one. Had the White House really been a great ducal establishment he might have done so; but as he could not so much as look at the White House without a sense of its discrepancy with the pretensions of the family, and unlikeness to everything that the mansion of the Joscelyns ought to be; and as the society there, when there was any society, was distinctly below, not above, his own level, he did not hesitate a moment as to his place of abode. He bought a house in Wyburgh, the county town; a modest house—but he did not want very much—where he was served most comfortably and carefully by Mrs. Eadie, the most excellent of managers, with the assistance of one small aid, and compensated himself for the

smallness of his establishment within doors by keeping a groom and a couple of horses, which were his personal luxuries. No horses in the country were more carefully groomed, and no groom presented a more neat and spruce appearance; and Mr. Henry still rode across country, though not with the daring which once sat so oddly on his prim little person. For he was little and light-coloured, exactly the reverse of the Joscelyns, like his mother, the small pale woman, whose over-masterfulness and tyrannical control of her sons, was said to have turned her grandson, the present man, and his father before him, to evil courses. She had wanted to make them good, to perfect their characters, whether they would or not; and the strong restraint she had exercised had made the re-action all the more vehement. So people said: except in the case of Henry, who took after his mother in every way, and had all her intolerance of useless people and indolent minds. He lived a life which was very satisfactory to himself in his little house in Wyburgh. He had besides a little bit of land in his native parish with an old house upon it, uninhabitable, but yet a creditable sort of possession in a corner of which Isaac Oliver—who was, in a very

lowly manner his bailiff—lived with his family. Mr. Henry was a much respected member of the county club which had its seat in Wyburgh, and to which his nephew of the White House might have sought admittance in vain. The duke himself treated old Henry, as he was called, with the utmost condescension. His position was never contended or doubted. He was as good a gentleman as the king. He knew more about the county than anyone else did, and called cousins remotely with many of the great people, who were most courteously ready to allow the kindred so far as Mr. Henry Joscelyn went; and he was an active magistrate, and took a certain interest in the town itself, where most people believed in him, and wondered how the Joscelyns could have gone off so completely since Mr. Henry's time—which was like the period before the deluge to the young people. And Mr. Henry was a man of the most regular habits. It might have been known what hour it was, had the town clock stopped in Wyburgh, by his appearance at the window, after he had breakfasted, with the newspaper in his hand, by the sound of his step as he went to the Club regular as the sun himself, and by his return to his dinner. These were the three departures, so to

peak, of his day. In the evening he dined out sometimes, at the Rectory, at Dr. Peregrine's, or with Mr. Despond, the solicitor: and now and then with some of the greater people about, where he drove in his own little brougham, which he kept expressly for such occasions. At other times one or two old inhabitants of the better class would drop in in the evening to make up his rubber. He looked very well after his money, and gave his neighbours excellent advice about their investments; and a more admirable member of society, a more respected townsman, could not be.

It may be supposed that to such a man, with such a life, the existence of a schoolboy under his roof had not been an unmixed pleasure. Still Mr. Henry Joscelyn was not a man to fail in his duties when they were pointed out to him. Though nobody but Mrs. Joscelyn guessed it, it was to the housekeeper that his family were indebted for Harry's preferment. Mrs. Eadie was just then greatly in want of somebody to be kind to. Her master, though he required the most scrupulous attention, did not come within this category, and the good woman had long sighed for a bairn in the house. When Harry was in the

house he did not see much of his uncle—their hours (thank heaven! Mr. Henry said, devoutly), being quite incompatible. The boy was off to school in the morning, long before Mr. Henry was up. He had his dinner in the middle of the day, when Mr. Henry was engaged in magisterial or county business, or in the Club. So they got on very well, and the old man was actually sorry when the boy set out in his turn for Liverpool to get an insight into “the business” in which his uncle had grown moderately rich; but this did not affect his methodical life, which flowed on just as before. Mr. Henry was growing old; even he himself acknowledged this, with cheerful readiness to other people, with a little impatience to himself. He spoke of his age with great equanimity in society when the subject was mooted, but he did not think of it when he could help it, nor did he like the thought. High and dry above all mortal loss and gain, quite safe from the agitations of life, very comfortable in all its circumstances, having succeeded in working out just the perfection of detail, the harmony of movement that satisfied him, it was a vexing and unpleasant reflection that this life was to be disturbed, broken in upon, brought to a

conclusion by illness and death. Sometimes the thought made him almost angry. Why? He was not, to be sure, so strong as he once was, but he was strong enough for all reasonable purposes, as strong as he required to be; and he had all his wits about him. Never had he been more clear-headed; and every sort of inclination to do things that were not good for him, whether in the way of eating or drinking, or other practices of a more strictly moral or immoral character had died out of his mind. He knew how to take care of himself exactly, and he did take the greatest care of himself. Why should he die? It was an idea that annoyed him. It seemed so unnecessary: he was not weary of life, nor had he the least desire to give it up. In such circumstances there had been a lurking feeling in his mind that Providence should know how to discriminate. But there was no telling how long Providence might choose to discriminate: and this recollection was about the only disturbing influence in a life so comfortable and well proportioned, and altogether satisfactory, that there seemed no reason whatever that it should ever come to an end.

“Mr. Harry here? How did he get here at such an hour in the morning? Why, he must

have started in the middle of the night."

"I make no doubt of that," said the house-keeper. She had brought up a second kidney, piping hot, and tender as a baby, upon a piece of toast, so crisp yet so melting, so brown and savoury, so penetrated by generous juices that it was in itself a luxury; "and for that and other things I have made him lie down upon his bed. He's not been in a bed this night, that's clear to see; he's sleeping like a babe in a cradle; it does the heart good to see him."

"I don't think it would do my heart good," said Mr. Henry, "the young fellow must have been up to some mischief. Did he give you any idea of what was the matter? or is it mere nonsense, perhaps a bet, or a brag, or something of that sort?"

"Mere nonsense—nay, nay, Sir, it's not that. He's got a look on his face—a look I have seen on your own face, Sir, when you are put out."

"I've told you a hundred times, Mrs. Eadie, there is not the slightest resemblance between Mr. Harry and me."

"And how are you to tell that, Sir, that canna see the two together? You are far more clever

than me in most things ; but my eyesight I must trust to." Mrs. Eadie made a little curtsy when she opposed her master. She had a conviction that it gave him a secret pleasure, though he would never confess it, to hear that Harry was like him ; and perhaps she was right.

"Have your own way," he said ; "but that makes no difference to the question. What's wrong ? has he said nothing to you ? You used to be great friends.

"I'm his true friend ; and stiddy well-wisher, as much good as I could do him ; and Mr. Harry has always been very kind," said the housekeeper, putting her master's sentiment in her own softest words ; "but he has said nothing to me. I did not look for it. He would not, being one of the proud Joscelyns, saving your presence, Sir, take a servant into his confidence. Though he's aye been very kind."

"We are proud, are we ?" said her master, with a half smile ; "well, perhaps that is a fault of the Joscelyns, Mrs. Eadie. You can send him to me when he wakes. Of course now that he is here I must listen to what he has to say."

But Mr. Henry sighed. He ate that delicious kidney with an internal sense of annoyance which

took half the savour out of it. He said to himself that it was always the case : when he came down in the morning with any unusual sentiment of comfort and well-being, something always happened to put him out. As sure as that light-heartedness came, something would follow to pull him down, something would go wrong in the Club, or his conduct in some petty session case would be aspersed in the "Wyburgh Gazette," or some old friend of his boyhood would send him a begging letter, or—still more annoying, something about the White House family would interfere with his digestion. "I might have known," he said to himself. He had got up at peace with all men ; with absolutely no care which he could think of when he woke and swept the mental horizon for causes of inconvenience, as it is one of the privileges of humanity to do—absolutely nothing to bring him any vexation or annoyance. He had believed that he was going to have a comfortable day. A little uneasiness which he had felt in his foot (he did not say, even to himself, in his toe), had gone off ; a stiffness which he had been conscious of had disappeared ; the wind had changed, going round to the southward, and the morning was quite warm for the time of the year. He had not been

buffeted about by the night wind, as Harry had, and at six in the morning, when poor Harry was so cold, he had been as warm as he could desire in bed. When he came down stairs the fire was just as he liked it, the newspaper with the chill taken off it, neatly cut, and folded, and a letter from the Duke, with a seal as big as a penny, was lying by his plate. It was an invitation, and Mr. Henry was much pleased. Never had a day begun more auspiciously. He had sat down, opened his napkin, poured out for himself an aromatic cup of coffee, laid the newspaper before him conveniently, so as to be able to glance his eye over the news, while he addressed himself to the more solid part of the meal. And it was while he was thus beginning the day, in peace with himself and all about him, that "the woman," as he called his housekeeper when anything went wrong, appeared with that kidney, and the cloud which was to overshadow the whole day. Of course it must be something wrong. Why could not the woman have recommended that boy to go back again, and make it up with his father, and not bother another person with his troubles? Had not every man troubles enough of his own? But he had been too comfortable. It was just as it always happened—whenever he

felt particularly at his ease, something, some annoyance or other, was certain to come. He sighed impatiently as Mrs. Eadie withdrew. But then he felt it to be his duty to himself to put all anxiety out of his thoughts, and to address himself seriously, if not with such a sensation of comfort, to his breakfast; it would do no good to himself or anyone if he put his digestion out of order for the rest of the day.

He had finished his breakfast and read his paper, and done some trifling businesses such as were of importance in his easy life, before Harry appeared. When a man or woman lives at perfect ease, with nothing to do, there are always some solemnities of supposed duty which they go through for their own comfort, to give a semblance of serious occupation to their day. With some people it is their correspondence, with others the rain-gauge and the thermometer, which they register with as grave a countenance as if the comfort of the country depended upon it. Mr. Henry's duty was the Club. He was looking over the accounts of the last half year with serious devotion. He spread this over a long time, doing a little every day, comparing all the items with their respective vouchers, and with the expendi-

ture of the previous half year. All had been perfectly satisfactory till this morning; but to-day he discovered that the sale of the waste-paper was not entered in the previous month, which made a difference of some seven shillings and sixpence, or thereabouts, in the half year's accounts, a difference such as ought not to have occurred. He could scarcely help feeling that this would not have happened had it not been for the very inopportune arrival of Harry, and introduction of the troubles of a family, things he had systematically kept clear of, into his comfortable and self-sufficing life.

He had just made this discovery—which obliged him to refer to the expenditure in the corresponding quarters of last year, and several years before, and make close investigation into what had then become of the waste paper, and who had bought it, and what price it had brought; and had made a careful note in his pocket-book of various questions to be put to the butler at the Club, who had the practical management of affairs—when the door opened and Harry appeared. Mr. Joscelyn looked up and made an instant mental estimate of his nephew, whom he had not seen for some time, on not very just grounds. Harry

had been immensely refreshed and restored by his breakfast, and the consciousness of having a roof over his head, and a legitimate right to be here; but his sleep perhaps had not done him so much good. At five-and-twenty a man can do without a night's rest with no very great inconvenience; but to have a snatch of insufficient sleep is of little advantage to him. It had made his eyes red, and given him an inclination to yawn, and confused his head. He had the look of a man who has been sleeping illegitimately, sleeping in daytime when other men are awake; and he was unshaven, and he had on a shirt of his uncle's, which was too tight at the throat, and otherwise of a fashion not adapted to a young man. His dusty coat had been brushed, and he was not really travel-soiled or slovenly, much the reverse indeed, for his appearance had been the cause of much more searchings of the heart both to himself and kind Mrs. Eadie than was at all usual in respect to Harry's simple toilette; but that air of suppressed fatigue and premature awakening, and altogether wrong-sidedness, was strong upon him. And he was deeply conscious of it. He knew exactly how he looked, with his eyes rather red, and that blueness on his chin, and Uncle Henry's collar cutting

his throat; and a great many doubts as to his reception by Uncle Henry—doubts which had not entered his mind before, arose within him in that first moment when, opening the door, he met the startled eyes of Mr. Joscelyn over the top of his spectacles, lifted to him with an alarmed and inquiring look. Harry saw that in a moment he was weighed in the balance and found wanting. This did not give him more ease in his manner, or a less painful sense of being on his trial.

“Good morning, Harry. I hear that you were a surprisingly early visitor this morning; but you keep early hours in the country. I hope there is nothing amiss at the White House.”

Mr. Joscelyn held out a hand, of which he was rather proud to be shaken by his grand-nephew. It was, he flattered himself, a hand that was in itself a guarantee of blue blood. Harry embraced it in the grasp of a powerful member with none of these qualities, and gave it a squeeze much more energetic than he had intended.

“There is a good deal amiss with me,” he said. Harry had been debating the point with himself for the last half-hour, whether he should fully confide in his uncle or not. He could not but feel that it would be wiser to deal lightly

with the fact of his exclusion from his father's house ; but he was so angry that he could not be prudent, and the moment that he had an opportunity of speech his temper broke out,

"I was not in bed all last night," he said ; "I was on the road like a tramp, Uncle Henry. My father turned me out of the house—"

Three lines came across Mr. Henry Joscelyn's brow—three horizontal, well-marked lines. These were two too many. When he was sympathetic a slight indentation over his eyebrows was all that appeared. The second meant doubt, the third annoyance.

"Dear me!" he said, "how did that happen? I fear you must have been doing something to displease your father."

"Who can help displeasing my father?" cried Harry. "I am sure, Uncle Henry, you know him well enough. I had been doing nothing wrong. I had been trying to get him to interest himself in my affairs. He has never done anything for me, it is you that have done everything for me. I laid before him a chance I've got. I meant at any rate to come and talk it all over with you ; but in the first place I thought it was as well to ask a question about my mother's money—"

"Ah—that was not quite an ingratiating way of opening the matter, I fear," Uncle Henry said.

"Why not?" cried Harry, forgetting all the prudential rules he had been trying to impose upon himself. "My mother was willing, and when it would have advanced my interests—and of course I should have paid as good a per-centage as anybody else. Surely if there is anything a man can have a claim upon," he added, argumentatively, "it must be his mother's money. I mayn't have any right to touch the family property, as I am only a younger son, and all that—and especially as there are such a lot of us; but my mother's money—when it is doing nothing, only lying at interest. Surely a man has a claim upon that."

"The man that has a claim upon that is your father, I should say. I never knew a man yet that liked any questions about his wife's money," said Mr. Joscelyn; "whether it's in her own power or in his, its not a nice thing to interfere with, You have your own ways of looking at things, you young fellows; but in your place I would have said nothing about that. I didn't know your mother had any money," he added, in an indifferent tone.

"It is only—a thousand pounds, Uncle Henry : not what you would call a fortune—"

Mr. Henry Joscelyn smiled, and waved his hand. Impossible to have waved away a trifle, a nothing, with a more complete representation of its nothingness. "Ah—that!—" he said, "I thought I never had heard anything about money. Well, I can't flatter you that your claim on your father was made in a very judicious way. And he would not hear of it? That is easy enough to understand; but why did he turn you out of doors?"

"I can't tell you," cried Harry, "I can tell you no more than that. I laid it all before him. It is a good opportunity, an opportunity that may never occur again. I have been in the office for three years, long enough to be a mere clerk."

"I have known very good men, Harry, who were clerks all their lives."

"Yes, yes," cried Harry, impatiently, "one knows that. There's an excellent fellow now in our office: but I don't suppose, Uncle Henry, that was what you intended for me."

"Well, my boy: I intended that you should earn your living and be off the hands of your family. I am not aware that I went much further.

Of course, if your own talents and industry pushed you on, one would have been very glad to hear of it; otherwise, in your circumstances, the fifth son, I should not be disposed to turn up my nose at the position of a mere clerk."

Harry gazed at his uncle while he spoke with an impatient reluctance and protest against every word. He could scarcely bear to hear him out; he had his mouth open to reply before Uncle Henry was half done: but when the old gentleman ended his speech, Harry, with a gasp as of baffled utterance, remained silent. He did not know what reply to make, he felt the ground cut from under his feet; how was he to ask his uncle to place himself in the breach, to do what his father would not do, when this was how his representation was received? He gazed at him with a hard breath and said nothing; for the moment his very utterance was taken away.

And then there was a pause. Mr. Joscelyn sat quietly with his gold spectacles between his fingers and thumb, looking at his nephew. The lines were gone from his forehead, he was quite bland and amiable, but demonstratively indifferent, with an air of having nothing whatever to do with the question, which, to Harry,

was exasperating beyond description. He kept his other hand upon the Club papers, which were his business. The young fellow who had so suddenly come down upon him in vehement wrath and offence, yet expectation, was manifestly nothing but an interruption to Uncle Henry. He was thinking of his waste-paper, not of the future prospects of any foolish young man. After a pause he spoke again.

“And when are you going back to business, Harry? I hope, now that you are here, that you will stay a day or two and renew your acquaintance with your old friends. Mrs. Eadie will make you very comfortable. I am sorry to say I am dining out both to-day and to-morrow, but if you like to have young Pilgrim, or Gus Grey, or any of your former acquaintances, my housekeeper is really equal to a very nice little dinner, as you know. I think I heard there was a dance getting up somewhere. Stay till the end of the week, if your leave lasts so long.”

“Uncle Henry,” said Harry, with an air of tragedy, which he was quite unconscious of, “you may suppose that a man who has been turned out of his father’s house, and has thrown off all connection with his native soil——”

"No, no, my boy, no, no," said Mr. Joscelyn, with a half laugh, "not so bad as that."

"I say," continued Harry, with increasing solemnity, "who has parted from his family for ever, and cut off all connection with his native soil—you may suppose that he hasn't much heart to pay visits or take up old acquaintances. What is there likely to be between me and Jack Pilgrim, who is stepping into his father's business, and as settled as the Fells? or Gus Grey, who is kept up and set forward at the Bar, though he is not earning a penny, by relations that think all the world of him? what can there be in common, I should like to know, between them and me? I'm only the fifth son, as you say, to start with, therefore I'm of no consequence; and, by Jove!" cried Harry, striking the table with his clenched fist, "if ever I enter that house while Ralph Joscelyn's the master of it—if ever I go back to knock at the door that was locked upon me, locked upon me in the middle of the night——"

Uncle Henry's brow contracted when that blow came down upon his neat writing-table; it shook the inkstand, which perhaps was overfull, and spilt a drop or two of ink, which of all things in

the world was the thing which annoyed him most. He mopped it up hurriedly with his blotting-paper, but his brow became dark, and his mouth drew up at the corners in a way that meant mischief.

"Pardon me," he said, with exquisite civility, "but to spoil my table will not do your affairs any good. It is a pity that you take such a very tragical view of the matter, but in your present state of mind nothing that I could say, I fear, would be of much use. Thick! thick! I don't think this spot is likely to come out."

"I am dreadfully sorry, uncle——" poor Harry began.

"Sorrow, so far as I am aware, does not take out ink-spots," said the old gentleman, testily; "perhaps you will do me the favour to ring for Eadie. If things are so very serious the less we say about them the better—heated discussions are never any good. I can only say that if you like to stay a day or two you are quite welcome, Harry. Mrs. Eadie, look here; the ink-bottle has been filled too full, perhaps you know something that will take it out."

"Dear, dear me!" Mrs. Eadie cried, with an anxious look from the old gentleman with his

crisped lips to the young fellow standing much abashed beside him, "it's that little lass again; but I take the blame to myself; I should never have trusted it out of my hands. Dear! dear! milk will may be do it. I wouldn't like to try benzine or salts of lemon."

"Try what you like, but get it out," said Mr. Joscelyn. "I'll see you, Harry, when I come back from the Club."

"Oh, my bonnie young gentleman!" cried Mrs. Eadie, when they were left alone, "you have said something that's gone against him! you have turned him the wrong way!"

"I think everything is turning the wrong way," said Harry, throwing himself into his uncle's easy-chair. He was still so young and unaccustomed to trouble that the tears came hot to his eyes. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Eadie, I'll be off before he comes back; I'll go straight off to my work, there's nobody will turn the cold shoulder upon me there."

"No, no, Mr. Harry, no, no, my canny lad, you must not be so hasty. Besides, you know as well as I do there's no train. It's coming out just with blotting-paper; look! see! When he comes back he'll have forgotten all about it, and I'll make

you up a nice little bit of something for your lunch, and you'll 'gree again, and get his advice. He's grand with his advice, and he's awfu' fond of giving it. Just you ask him for his advice, Mr. Harry, and you'll 'gree like two birds in a nest. It's aye how I come round the maister when he has cast out with me."

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE HARRY'S ADVICE.

MR JOSCELYN returned from the Club to lunch, which was not very usual for him. After all, at the bottom of his heart, there was a vein of kindness in him for the boy whom he had trained. After his little anger wore off, Harry's face, so tragical in its expression, came back to his mind with a mixture of amusement and compassion. It was tragic-comic to Mr. Henry; but there was no comic element in it to the young man. He came home by no means intending to put himself in the breach, and replace for Harry's benefit that thousand pounds of his mother's money, which the young fellow had calculated upon; but still with an impulse of kindness. A thousand pounds! That was a pretty sort of fortune for the woman who married

Joscelyn of White House. It made him laugh with angry scorn. Little insignificant woman, whose pretty face even was nothing out of the way, a kind of prettiness that faded, a sort of parson's daughter's gentility, not even anything that could be called beauty, or that would last. Mr. Henry Joscelyn had been absent from the district, he had not yet retired from "the world," as he called it, when his nephew married, and he had never known before exactly how bad a match it was. Ralph was a clown to be sure, in himself worthy no better fate; but the head of the Joscelyns, Mr. Henry reflected with a bitter smile, might certainly have been worth something more than a thousand pounds. It was ridiculous, it was exasperating; he did not wonder that Ralph had been angry when his son had asked for this paltry thousand pounds. Considered as a fee for the privilege of entering the Joscelyn family, it was ridiculously inadequate—and as a fortune! He laughed aloud as he crossed the street to the Club, an angry laugh. After all it was not much wonder that Ralph had deteriorated. A wife with a faded face, no ancestors, and a thousand pounds—poor Ralph! if he had not been so insufferable his uncle would have been sorry for him. And now

here was the boy asserting a claim to this enormous fortune; probably Mrs. Joscelyn herself thought it a great sum of money, enough to set up Harry in business, and do a great deal for him. Tck-tck! how mean and petty it all was, not like the old ways of the house, which were not small whatever they were. The Joscelyns in their day had gone into debt in a princely manner; and they had married money in their day; but to come to such a point that the mother's great fortune of a thousand pounds was worth fighting about, between father and son! Tck-tck, tck-tck, what a wonderful thing it was!

Nevertheless as Harry, poor boy, had been brought up within that limited horizon, he could not help being sorry for him. It was sad for a young man. He was rather fond of the boy; so far as he did give in to the prejudice that because a boy was your grand-nephew you ought to be fond of him, Harry, it certainly was, that was the object of his affections. After all he was a Joscelyn, and, as Joscelyns went in the present generation, as good a specimen as any. This was not saying very much, but still it was something to say; for though the Joscelyns of a former generation were in every way superior, yet it was

clear that it was impossible to go back to them. However much we may prefer the past we must all have, it is evident, to put up with the present. Mr. Joscelyn transacted his Club business, and went very closely into that question about the waste-paper. The waste-paper at the Club was of a very superior kind. It was chiefly made up of letters and circulars printed on fine paper, and the *brouillons* of replies, which even the rural magnates, who frequented the place, liked to write out once before they actually produced the autograph which was to go to their correspondents; it brought a far better price than the usual refuse of a house. But this the present major-domo had failed to grasp; he had treated these choice scraps as if they had been old newspapers. Mr. Joscelyn fully proved his mistake to the reluctant functionary, who was disposed to sneer at the whole business.

“After all, Sir, it is only five shillings difference—and I don’t mind if I paid that out of my own pocket, sooner than make a fuss;” said the flippant official. Mr. Joscelyn looked at him with eyes from which the finest London butler, much less a trifling person in the country, might have shrunk.

“My man,” he said, “the difference is seven and sixpence, and I don’t know what your pocket has to do with it. The state of your pocket is a matter of perfect indifference to the Club; but it is my business to see that our property is not wasted. I hope I shall not have to make a complaint on this subject again.” When he had said this he went home, with some little complacency to see Harry, feeling that his time had not been wasted, and that the property of the Club was not likely to be neglected in this manner again. As for Harry he had not left the house. He had resisted all Mrs. Eadie’s exhortations to send a note to his mother, telling her where he was, or even to send for his luggage, declaring that he would have nothing to do with them, that he would take nothing out of the house, nor ever return to it. And since he could not show himself in Uncle Henry’s high collars, Mrs. Eadie had gone out to the best shop there was in Wyburgh to get some linen for him, and a few necessary articles; while he himself sat in the tranquil house, the peaceful old man’s habitation, where everything was adapted for comfort, every chair an easy-chair, every passage and stair carpeted and noiseless, and the atmosphere kept up to one regular

warmth by the thermometer. Harry sat in his uncle's snuggery, half stifled by the want of air, half asleep in the drowse of warmth and comfort. He had rarely entered these rooms when he was a school-boy—in those days he had been much more at home with Eadie than with her master—and to sit there now had a strange sort of Sunday feeling, a suggestion of silent ease and contemplative leisure. He could understand Uncle Henry liking it. If you were an old man with ever so much to look back upon, it would, no doubt (he thought) be pleasant to sit in these arm-chairs for hours together, and review the past, turning everything over, and living it through once more; but at Harry's age, with so little to look back upon, and so much to look forward to, this slumbrous calm would have been intolerable but for the strange feverish weariedness of that *nuit blanche* which he had spent in wandering over the dark country, and which made the present warmth and quiet at once oppressive and luxurious. He dropped asleep half-a-dozen times in the course of the morning, waking up more uncomfortable and feverish than ever, and ashamed of himself to boot. What would have done him more good would have been to go out and walk off his

drowse ; but then the thought of the high collar, which cut his cheek, and of all the acquaintances to whom this masquerade would have to be explained, made the idea of going out still more insupportable ; while on the other hand to think that he was here under a kind of hiding, skulking indoors, not wishing to be seen, was terrible to the unsophisticated youth, who had never before known what it was to shrink from the eye of day.

All these things worked bitterly in Harry's mind as he sat and turned them over, falling into vague feverish moments of forgetfulness, rousing up again to more angry and uncomfortable consciousness than before. Of course, he could not think of any other subject. He took up the newspaper and tried to read it, but after he had gone over a sentence or two, some scene from the last twenty-four hours would glide in over the page and obliterate everything—his father's furious face lowering upon him, or that pale glare in the window of the house which was now shut up and closed to him for ever ; or the confused darkness of the shed in which Joan (old Joan, a kind soul after all, as he said, in his boyish jargon) had tried to comfort him—or it might be merely

at incident of his night's walk, the sound of the water running below him as he stopped on the bridge, only its sound betraying it in the darkness, or the sudden graze of his hand against a wall as he made his way through the gloom, or the dogs barking, baying against him on all sides. These scenes came flashing before him one by one; and then his young cheeks would grow red and hot as he remembered how he shrank from the policeman's lantern, and avoided the eye of the carter driving his cabbages to the market in the grey of the morning. He had done nothing to be ashamed of, and yet he had been made to feel guilty and ashamed; what greater wrong could be done to a youth in the beginning of his career?

All this went through his mind, not in any formal succession—now one scene, now another touching his sore and angry soul to sudden exasperation. That he should have to remain all the long day inactive after this convulsion which had changed his life, was an additional irritation to him. Since Uncle Henry had failed to show him any sympathy, what he would have liked would have been to rush out on the moment and post away somewhere out of reach, he did not mind where. In old days, or in primitive places,

when a man could hire a horse or a carriage and set out at once, there must have been a wonderful solace in that possibility of instant action ; but to wait for a train is a terrible aggravation of the impatience of an angry or anxious mind, even though the train arrives much sooner at its destination than the other could do. The long hours of daylight which must pass ere that train came up seemed to be years to him. He longed for the clang and the movement as for the only comfort that remained to him. After, he did not know what would happen. He would go back to Liverpool ; he could realise the arrival there, but he did not know what would follow. Was he to accept his defeat quietly, to sit down upon his stool and continue his work, and see some one else, unfamiliar to the office, enter and pay his money, and take the place which Harry was to have had ? All this made the blood mount to his cheeks again in successive waves. Could he bear it ? could he put up with it ? Sometimes the blood seemed to boil in his veins and swell as if they would burst ; and there came upon him, as upon so many others, that wild sudden burst of longing—oh ! to have wings like a dove, to fly away ! It is not always an elevating or noble

longing; it is the natural outcry of that sense of the intolerable which is in all unaccustomed to trouble. To escape from it is the first impulse of the undisciplined mind. Even when experience has taught us that we cannot escape from it, nature still suggests that cry, that desire, Oh to have wings like a dove! oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness! oh to turn our backs upon our pain and all its circumstances, and flee away! And the less this impulse is spiritual and visionary, the less it is restrained by that deeper knowledge so soon acquired that we can rarely escape from our troubles by any summary road, seeing that we can never escape from ourselves. Harry began to get bewildered by the rising fever in his heart of this longing to escape. Why should not he escape? cut all the bonds of which so many had already been rent asunder for him, throw family, and home (which had rejected him), and duty, and custom, and the life he knew, and the circumstances which had hitherto shaped it, all away with one effort, and emancipate himself?

He had roused a little under the influence of this suggestion when his uncle returned. Mr. Joscelyn had a compunction in his mind which

made him very conciliatory to Harry. To give him what he seemed to want, to subtract so much, even if not very much, from his own possessions in order to give to Harry, was an idea which he would not contemplate. If Harry waited long enough he would get it; but in the meantime, a demand upon him was like a warning that he had lived long enough, and that his money was wanted for a new generation, which was as intolerable to Uncle Henry as young Harry's troubles were to him. He would not take upon himself the burden of setting his grandnephew up in life, but at the same time he felt it was a hardship that the young fellow should not have some one to set him up in life, and was conciliatory and soothing by a kind of generous instinct, an instinct not generous enough to go further. He came in in a mood which was much more agreeable to Harry than that in which he had gone out, and which raised Mrs. Eadie's hopes high, who knew that her master did not often come back in this way, or show himself so amiable. Mr. Joscelyn told Harry all the story of the waste-paper, and gave him great insight into the workings of the Club.

"If you are faithful to your native county,

as I have been, I daresay you will end by being a member of it," he said.

"It is not very likely, Sir," said Harry. "I don't care if I were never to see the old place again."

"That is nonsense," said his uncle, promptly. "That's a question of age entirely. At your time of life you think that all that is to be desired is to be in the world, and you don't understand that the world is not in one place as much as another, not the grand world in London, or the business world in Liverpool, but is just your world wherever you may happen to be."

This was above Harry, who gaped slightly, and opened his eyes with curiosity and wonder.

"You will scarcely say that this is the world like London," he said, with that smile of youthful comment upon the mysterious obtuseness of their elders which is general to every new generation.

"But this is just what I do say, my boy; you have your little world round about you, and neither is it bigger in the noise of a big place, nor smaller in the quiet of a little one. We are capable just of so much, and that we get wherever we are."

Harry opened his eyes a little more; but he

thought it just as well to say nothing. He thought no doubt this was a kind of dotage; but resorted quickly to his own concerns, which were so much more important than any philosophy of his uncle's.

"I don't think," he said, "if I were once out of it that I should want to come back."

"Ah, well, I should probably have said the same thing at your age. One's ideas change from twenty to seventy," said Mr. Henry, feeling that perhaps after all it was expedient to steer clear of generalities. "Let us see what Eadie has sent us for luncheon. I don't often cut lunch myself; when one breakfasts rather late, as I do, it is as well to reserve one's self till dinner; but you were a great deal earlier, Harry, and besides at your age you are always hungry—blessed provision of nature."

"I don't think I'm always hungry; in the office one can't indulge in much eating," said Harry, a little resentful.

"When I was like you we used to go out to a little tavern. I daresay it's gone now. I could show you the place—I could go there blindfold, I believe—where they made the most excellent chops. Ah! there are no such chops now. Mrs.

Eadie sends us very nice cutlets, but it is not the same thing. We made our dinner of them, and when we got back to our lodgings, in my time, we had tea."

"So most of us have now," said Harry, "it saves a great deal of trouble; it's a big dining place now, there's a grill-room as big as the Market—"

Mr. Henry held up his hands in anxious deprecation.

"Don't tell me anything about it. I know; a place like a railway-station; the very railway-station itself has been invented since my time. Your world has become a great deal busier and more hurried; but it is not so comfortable, Harry. I am fond of good cookery, but I never got anything better than those chops. As for the tea it always appeared to me about the worst thing in the shape of a meal that a depraved imagination could invent—very bad for the digestion, and neither nourishing nor nice."

"But you can't get your people in your lodgings to cook dinner for you," said Harry, entering into this question with feeling, "they don't know how—and then they won't—they are dreadfully independent. So we have to do the best

we can. And I am not like you, Uncle Henry ; in your time I suppose the Joscelyns were swells ? but they never were, you know, in my day. I was brought up like that."

"The Joscelyns of my time, Harry, would never have recognized themselves in your description. They would not have known what swells meant," said Mr. Henry, rather severely ; but he did not enter into details, for indeed, though they were "swells," the living had always been very plain at the White House.

Then there was a little pause, and Harry felt better after two or three of Mrs. Eadie's cutlets. He said in a moment of repose,

"I am going off, Uncle Harry, by the train to-night."

"Are you so ? but what are you to do about your luggage ? you can't go without your luggage."

"But I shall—I'll ask nothing. I'll take nothing out of that house."

"This is foolish, Harry. You should rather take everything you can get ; but, however, I hope I know better than to argue with an angry man—or boy. You are quite right to get back to your work."

"It is about the only thing I have got left," said Harry, somewhat tragically.

"And you could not have a better thing. But you will not always feel like that. If you would like it, though I don't know that it is a very hopeful office, I would see your father, Harry."

"Nobody need see my father on my account," cried Harry; his lips quivered a little, but nothing save wrath was in his face; "that's all over. For my part I shouldn't mind if it were all over together. I hate Liverpool just as I hate Cumberland. I have a great mind to go clean off—"

"Abroad? and the very best thing you could do. Show yourself fit to keep up the credit of your employers abroad, and it's the best stepping stone to advancement at home. I am very glad to hear you have such an enlightened notion."

Harry was not pleased to have the ground thus cut from under his feet. To be told, when you hint at what seems a desperate resolution, that it is the best thing you can do, is exasperating. He withdrew with dignity from the field and proffered no more confidence. The cutlets gave him a safer outlet, for though he was in trouble he was hungry. It was a long time since six o'clock; he had resisted Eadie's offers of a "snack" between,

and the cutlets, though very nice, were not more than a mouthful to Harry. Mr. Joscelyn trifled with one on his plate; but he supplied his nephew with a liberal hand.

"I shan't be here, I am afraid, to see you away. I am dining out, as I told you—it is unfortunate. But you are used to looking after yourself."

"I would need to be," said Harry, bitterly, and then he added, "I'll say goodbye to you now, Uncle Henry. Very likely I'll never see you again. I don't know what I'm going to do, or where I may be going. You've always been very kind to me; a fellow does not think anything of that at the time—it seems all just a matter of course, you know. But I see now you've always been very kind. I shall remember it as long as I live. I said last night, *he* had never done anything for me, it was all Uncle Henry. So it is, though I'm not sure that I ever thought of it before."

Mr. Joscelyn smiled, but he was touched.

"Well, well, Harry," he said; "that was natural; but now you show a very nice feeling. And I always was glad to do what I could for you. As schoolboys go you were not at all objectionable. and though you are a little out of temper now

things will come round. Put that in your pocket. It's only a trifle; but I daresay you may want some little things, especially if you're going abroad. That's all. Let me hear how you are going on from time to time. I shall always be glad to hear."

And then he began to talk of the news, and what the Duke was going to do in the prospect of a new election for the county. "If Lord Charles does not get in, it will be ridiculous—worse than wrong, absurd, considering the stake they have in the county." But it may be supposed that, in the present crisis of his affairs, Harry Joscelyn cared very little for Lord Charles. He replied civilly to his uncle's talk; but as a matter of fact he was very anxious to see what was in the envelope which Mr. Joscelyn had insisted he should put in his pocket. It was not likely it would be anything of an exciting character; but yet there was no telling. When, however, Uncle Henry was gone, and Harry was free to examine this envelope, it proved to contain two crisp ten pound notes—no more. He was very much disappointed at first, thinking (foolishly) that it might even be the capital he wanted—the thousand pounds to set him up. But after a while,

and somewhat grudgingly, Harry allowed to himself that it was kind. Sometimes there is more pleasure to be got out of twenty pounds than out of a thousand. Uncle Henry meant it very kindly. The young man's heart was a little softened and warmed, almost against his will, by the gift.

And when evening came, and with it the train which roars along between that deep cutting under the fells, between two high walls of living stone, to "the South" and the world, Harry, with a little portmanteau, in which Mrs. Eadie had packed the things she had bought for him, walked down to the station, boldly passing both lamps and policemen, and went away. The little portmanteau was not half full; but Eadie thought it was "more respectable." He felt so himself. To have gone without any luggage at all would have given him a thrill of shame. It was with a strange forlorn feeling that he lounged about the station, looking at everything as if he might never see it again. Strangely enough he seemed to find out features in the place which he had never noticed before, in that last look round, things which his indifferent eye had seen, without noticing, ever so often; but which now at last he

perceived, and would recollect as part of Wyburgh, should he never see it again. He was glad that it was dark when the train swept through the valley in which the White House was. Though he could not see anything, yet he went to the other side of the carriage, and so plunged along, passing all those familiar places without seeing them, yet more vividly conscious of them than, he thought, he had ever been before. What were *they* thinking, he wondered? Would they have any suspicion that he was passing, going away—for ever. For ever! something else seemed to say this in the air about him, not his own voice. Was it possible that he might never pass this way again?

CHAPTER IX.

WAITING.

JOAN did not sleep much on that eventful night. She lay down in her bed after the uncomfortable sleep which she had snatched among the wash-tubs, but it was more as a matter of form than for any good there was in it. She was secretly very anxious about Harry. Though she had taken upon her so cheerfully to affirm that he had gone to the "Red Lion," she had not any confidence in this suggestion. She lay staring at the window as it slowly grew a glimmering square, in the cold blue of the dawn-ing, wondering what had become of him. She had no great imagination, and therefore there did not rush upon her mind a crowd of visionary dangers such as would have besieged her mother.

but she lay with her face turned up to the ceiling and her eyes wide open, asking herself what he was likely to have done ; what he would be doing now ? He might fall into bad company, she thought, with a distinct identification of one house in the village which did not bear a very good reputation, and of which, as it happened, Harry was entirely ignorant ; or he might go straight off to the office, which, on the whole, was the best thing he could do. That was all very well for the future ; but where was he to-night ? where was he *now* ?

This was a question which Joan could not answer to herself. She thought over a great many things during the unaccustomed vigil. Never before had her mother's anxieties and "fuss" appeared as they now did to Joan with a certain amount of reason in them. Certainly father was getting beyond bearing, she said to herself. He was worse the older he grew. She had told him that she was the best servant he had in the house, though she got no wages, and it was true. If she liked "to take a situation" she could earn excellent wages, and get praise instead of abuse for what she did. She was not a person to be put upon in any way, and yet there were times when he "put upon" even her. The contempla-

tion of all this did not move her to any impulses of furious indignation, as Harry was moved, but she thought, lying there in the grey dawn, that it would have to be put a stop to somehow. As for taking a situation, that was out of the question. Joan was a very homely woman, not much better educated than the dairy-maid, and accustomed to none of the softnesses of life, but yet she was Miss Joscelyn of the White House, and nothing could have obliterated from her mind the consciousness of this dignity which gave her nothing, and yet was everything to her. Possessing this rank, it was impossible for her to "take a situation." She did not mind what she did in her father's house, but to earn money would have been a degradation. She regretted it even, for she knew very well that she was a capable person, able to "put her hand" to many things; but it was as indisputable as if she had been Princess Royal of an ancient kingdom. Could she have done this, and taken her mother away, and supported her by the work of her own hands, she would have been now wound up to do it; but, as it was impossible, she cast about in her mind what else she could do to mend matters. Father was too bad, there was no deny-

ing that ; he had gone a great deal too far, and it would not be possible to put up with him much longer. She concocted several speeches to be made to him, but none of them seemed to her sufficient. To be sure, on the other hand, mother *would* make a fuss. She would not take anything easily. To see her excitement and anxiety over the smallest matters was enough to provoke even a patient temper. She could not take things as they came ; that was a kind of excuse, perhaps, for father's violence. Joan turned over all these things in her mind, as if her parents stood before the bar and it was her business to judge them. A woman of thirty cannot go on with those childish fictions of reverence which make criticism a sin. Indeed, even a child, the youngest, unconsciously criticises as soon as it is able to think, and we are all standing before the most awful of tribunals unawares when we live our lives and show forth our motives before our babies ; and Joan had long ceased to be a baby. She saw her father and mother all round, and estimated them calmly. *He* had not many qualities which were good, perhaps not any at all ; *she* had a great many amiable and tender graces of character of which her daughter was vaguely

aware, but she was of a nature which is very provoking to a calm and judicious spirit. Thus Joan saw them as they were, with the clearest impartial vision. What a pity that two such people had married to make each other unhappy ! Joan had a sort of impatient feeling that, if she had only been in the world then, she certainly would have done something to prevent the union which had brought her into the world. This was the amusing side of her judicial impartiality. It went the length sometimes of a comical impatience that she had not been there to keep matters straight between them.

All this glanced through her mind as she lay staring at the ceiling, or at the blue square of the window gradually growing more visible. There was no sleep for her that night. The first part of it she had found uncomfortable enough, but sleep had been strong upon her. Now she was comfortable, but had thoroughly shaken off sleep. She thought over all the turmoil of the family, and its agitations. He had never done anything so bad as this before. There had been storms in the house without number, but he had always let the mother smooth things down. He had never shut out any of "the boys," which was what she

called even her brothers who were married and had boys of their own. And Harry was the one most like his mother; most likely to make a fuss and take such an accident in the worst way. Where had Harry gone? What was he doing? Where could he go in the middle of the night?

When she had come back to this subject, Joan felt almost too restless to stay in bed. If she had but thought of it at the time she would have gone after him; she would have prevented him from going away. To think she should have been so overcome by sleep as not to know when Harry had disappeared, or to be aware that he was gone! She turned and twisted about in the self-annoyance caused by this, and could not rest. If she had not been so sleepy, she might have stopped Harry and averted the catastrophe, for she felt vaguely that a catastrophe it was. And what would become of his mother if anything had happened to him? "Tut," said Joan, to herself, "I am getting as bad as mother herself. There is a bit of mother in me, though I did not think it. What should have happened to him? He's sound asleep now while I'm moivering myself about him. To be sure he must have knocked somebody up and got a bed somewhere;

but in the morning he'll go over to Will's, or Tom's, or even Uncle Henry's. Things are bad enough as they are. Father's getting that bad that even me, *I* can't put up with him; and mother's life's a trouble to her:—and to other folks too," she added involuntarily, with a quaint, comic twist of her upper lip. But notwithstanding this strong sense in her mind that her mother's example was not one to follow, and that there was in its pathos a faint touch of the ridiculous, she yet could not succeed in divesting her own mind of uneasiness. As soon as there was light enough to see by she got up, and roused the maids, who were tolerably early risers, but yet were now and then subjected to the ignominy of being called by Miss Joan. "You would sleep if it was the day of judgment," she cried, standing at the door of the room in which two of them were hastily jumping up, rubbing their eyes. "Why didn't you get up and let me in last night?"

"Get oop and let ye in?" the women cried aghast.

"I pulled the door upon me when I thought I had left it on the jar," said Joan, with prompt and unblushing falsehood, "and then I knocked

till I thought I should have brought down the house ; but not a soul of you stirred—till my poor mother, that is so delicate, got out of her warm bed and opened to me. I would have died of cold but for the copper you lighted last night ; and here you are at five o'clock in the morning snoring like all the seven sleepers, and a big washing in hand. Do you mean me to do it myself ?”

“ But Lord, Miss Joan, what were ye doin' oot o' t' house at night ?” said the eldest of the maids.

“ That's none of your business,” said Joan, “ and unless you want to see me at the washing-tub you had better hurry. What you want with all that sleep, and all that meat, is more than I can tell. I'll do a better day's work than the best of you upon half of it. Get up to your washing, ye lazy hussies.” Joan clapped the door with a little noise behind her, so as to obliterate this word, which her grandmother would have used with the greatest openness, but which the progress of civilisation has made less possible even in the free-speaking north ; but it relieved her mind to say it, though she took pains that it should not be heard. As for the two women, they laughed with little sound, but much demonstration, when

the door was closed ; one of them throwing herself upon a chair in convulsions of suppressed mirth. "Auld Joan, t'auld toad, has gotten a lad at last," they said. The idea that she had been shut out in the cold in this very unusual courtship was such a joke to them as no wit could have equalled. "T'auld Joan !" who was always so much wiser than everybody else, and repressed "lads" with the strong hand. But notwithstanding the excellency of the joke, they made haste to their washing, as Joan was not a person to be trifled with, and soon the scene of her disturbed slumber was full of noise, and bustle, and steam, and all the commotion of a big washing, which always carries with it some features of a Saturnalia. As the big pairs of red arms played in and out of the steam and froth, a continued tempest of talk accompanied the operations ; but there were lulls now and then, especially when any new-comer appeared, when the event of the night was communicated in loud whispers, with peals of accompanying laughter. "T'auld Joan's gotten a lad at last." "What's the joke?" she said, on one occasion, coming in abruptly ; but this merely threw the company, which was in full enjoyment of the witticism, into wilder convul-

sions of laughter. Perhaps Joan guessed what it was. "You can have your fun for me, as long as you do your work," she said. She was not troubled by uneasy suggestions of *amour-propre*. The maid who did the indoor work did not get off so easily. She made a kind of confession. "I heard t' master aboot. I durstn't get oop, and him there; and, Miss Joan, I dunno if you ken—Master Harry's been oot aw night. His bed's just as t'was."

"Mr. Harry's gone over to his brother's. He made up his mind only last night," said Joan, without a wince. When there are domestic strifes going on, the women of the family, always the most anxious to keep scandal silent, have to lie with a composure invincible. Joan was a woman who was true as steel, and would not have told a falsehood on any other occasion for a kingdom; but this kind of lie did not touch her conscience at all. She did not think of it as a falsehood. She was willing even to deliver over her own reputation to the discussion of her servants sooner than let in the light upon the family quarrel. Whether Betty believed her or not was a different matter; at all events here was an explanation. All the little bustle of getting the work of the

household set a-going, through which she swept like a whirlwind, amused her mind for the moment, but did not lessen the anxiety, which came back like a flood after this was accomplished, and her own individual part of the morning's work done. When she got through her dairy occupations the uneasiness overflowed. She took old Simon the cowman into a corner. He was a very old servant of the house and had seen all the children born, and was interested in every one of them and their concerns, and all that had happened to them—of which events he was a walking chronicle. “The year Master Will wan t’ race up at Bo’castle.” “The year Master Tom broke’s bones in t’ shindy election-time.” These were his dates. He was an old bachelor, and it was believed that he had not another thought but the house and what went on within it. Joan took him aside into a corner of the wealthy but not very tidy yard, which was his domain. “I want you to do a message for me, Simon, something I wouldn’t ask another man about the place to do.”

Simon gave her an acute, but slightly wondering, glance out of the old blue eyes, which kept their youthful hue, though they had lost their clearness, and which looked out of an old face, brightly

tinted with fine hues of crimson and orange. The old man was, an æsthetic person would have said, a glorious bit of colour. The orange and the crimson were almost pure tints in his old weather-beaten countenance, and his eyes, though they were old, were of a kind of china-blue. He had a quantity of somewhat ragged, yet venerable white hair, and stooped a little, but trudged along with his stick as quickly as any younger man about, and was perfectly hale and vigorous. He had all his wits about him, though he was old. He looked at Joan keenly, yet with a dubious gleam in his eyes. He had heard already—who had not?—that Joan, Joan herself, the judge of everybody, had been out at the door courtin', and had been shut out. His glance meant a question; was it possible that she meant to employ him as her messenger to the lover who was so mysterious and incredible a personage, and about whom already "aw t' house" had been exercised to know who he could possibly be?"

"I'll do my best," he said, taking off his hat with a rustic impulse to scratch his head, a process which seems to have been considered good for the brains since the world began.

"I'm a little anxious about Harry," said Joan,

“and so is mother—mother far more than me; you know she will never take things easy.”

Simon nodded his head a great many times in energetic assent; no doubt he knew—who better? had not he been sent off for the doctor a hundred times when there was not much need of the doctor, and seen the Mistress wringing her hands over what seemed to the household in general very small occasion a hundred times more? To be sure she took nothing easy. That was very well known.

“Harry,” said Joan, “walked over last night, I think, to Will’s; but it’s a long walk, and you know he’s used to towns now, not to country ways.”

To this Simon responded with his usual nod, but shook his head all the same, by way of protest against bringing up a Joscelyn in a town.

“It’s a pity? Well, it may be,” said Joan; “but it’s the fact, Simon. Now I think most likely he stopped at the ‘Red Lion,’ not to wake us up again or disturb my mother. She never sleeps but with one eye open, I believe, and hears like a hare. You heard what happened to me last night. The door blew to behind me when I was just out, looking what kind of a night it was. Ne’er a

one heard in the house but mother. That's just like her. Now Harry knows that, and he would think it would disturb her if he came back."

Simon listened to all this with a perfectly stolid countenance; but he knew as well that his young mistress was romancing, and inventing as she went on—as well as the most fine critic could have done. He listened with his eye upon her, with a word now and then to show that his interest was fully kept up; but he saw through her, and Joan was partly aware of his scepticism.

"So we think—or I think," said Joan, "that he may have stopped at the 'Red Lion;' and I want to know; but, Simon, I don't want you to go like a lion roaring and ask, has Mr. Harry Joscelyn slept a' night here? I want you to go warily and find out—find out, you understand?"

"Withoot askin'? ay, ay, Miss Joan, I ken what ye mean," Simon said, with many nods of his white head.

"Then bless us, man, go!" said Joan, whose anxiety had little ebullitions from time to time, paroxysms which astounded her afterwards. She put her hand on Simon's arm and almost shook him in her passion; then stopped and

laughed at herself—"I have a deal of mother in me after all," she said. "There, go as fast as your old legs will carry you, and bring me back word."

Simon liked to be taken into the confidence of his masters. He was of the old fashion, not much unlike a slave or serf bound to the soil, not perhaps a desirable kind of human being, but very useful to the masters of him, and a much more picturesque figure than a modern servant. He arraigned the family before his tribunal, and judged them much as Joan did, knowing the weaknesses of each. He was of the kind of valet to whom his master is never a hero; he saw them as do children, exactly as they were, and knew all their fretfulness and pettiness as well as their larger faults. But this did not interfere with his faithfulness and devotion. He did not believe in them as perfect, nor in anything as perfect. He was such a cynic as imperfect gods must always make. The objects of his devotion were poor creatures enough, as he was well aware, but this rather made him certain that all men were poor creatures than that his "owners" were exceptionally petty. He gave them the first place in his universe all the same, and

served them, and considered their interest before his own. Perhaps, however, this is rash to say. He had no special interests of his own ; he was an old bachelor, without relations to whom he had attached himself. He had attached himself to "the family" instead of these ties, and though he did not contemplate the family in any ideal light, yet it had all the soul he possessed, and its interests were his first object. He nodded his head a great many times after Joan left him, as he prepared to go to the village. "I understand," he said to himself. But it was very doubtful whether he did understand ; he did not connect Joan's supposed escapade with this curious mission ; notwithstanding, as he was wily by nature, he set off with all the intention of accomplishing what he had to do with wile. He took a basket on his arm in which he packed the butter which was sold in the village. Joan making the discovery to her dismay, yet not without a smile, of more and more of her mother in her, could scarcely endure all his preparations, and had nearly rushed out of her dairy and pushed him out with her own hands ; but she recollected in time that it was useless to interfere with Simon, who never did anything except in his own way.

All this was long before the hour at which ordinary mortals have their breakfast, before even Mrs. Joscelyn, trembling and pale, had ventured to get up. The morning had been a long one for the poor lady; she had not slept any more than her daughter; she had lain still, not daring to move after all the house was astir, feeling as if she were fixed to her uneasy bed by a stake. She writhed upon it faintly, but could not pull it up, and lay still with her ears open to every sound till her husband, usually early enough, but whose disturbed night had made him late this morning of all mornings, got up and took himself away. Then it was for the first time that poor Mrs. Joscelyn really felt a little of the warmth of that sympathy for which she had longed all her life. Joscelyn had scarcely stamped off with his big tread downstairs, when an equally firm, if not so loud, step came up, and after a moment Joan appeared at her mother's bedside with a cup of tea in her hand.

"Here is something to comfort you a bit, mother," she said. Mrs. Joscelyn like most nervous women believed that there was a kind of salvation in tea.

"Oh! have you any news of my Harry, Joan?"

that will comfort me more than anything else," she cried.

"Now, mother," said Joan, "why will you make a fuss? Could I send over to the 'Red Lion' first thing in the morning to ask, is Harry lodging in your house? as if we were frightened of him. We've no reason to be frightened of him that I know. Am I to go and give him a bad character because father's behaved bad, and Harry's taken offence. We mustn't be unreasonable. You wouldn't like to raise an ill name on the poor boy,"

"Oh, no, no—anything but that," Mrs. Joscelyn said. She was silenced by this plea; but her heart was still torn with anxiety. She looked wistfully in her daughter's face with her lips trembling. "Do you think there is nothing that can be done without exposing him, Joan?"

"Well, mother, I'll see. We don't want to expose anybody. I've told a heap of fibs myself," said Joan, with a broad smile, "and all the women think they've caught me. I know what they're thinking, they're wondering who I had to chatter with at the door. They'll maybe on the whole," she added, laughing, "think all the better of me if they think I am courtin'—so I

will let them think what they like, and we must expose nobody. Father's a trial, but as long as we can we must just keep him to ourselves."

"Ah, Joan," said Mrs. Joscelyn, wringing her thin hands, "you can laugh, but I feel a great deal more like crying. I can think upon nothing but my poor boy."

"Well, mother," said Joan, "crying is not my line. I'll not pretend to more; but it's just as well there is one of us that can laugh, or what would become of us both I don't know. Take your tea; it will be quite cold; and lie still and get a rest. The very first news I have I will bring you, and you're far better out of the way if you'll take my advice."

"I wish I was out of the way altogether. I wish I were in my grave. When I was young I could bear it, but now my heart's failed me. Oh, I just wish that once for all I was out of the way!"

"You make too much fuss, mother," said Joan. "I am always telling you. If you could take things easy it would be far better. Out of the way! and what would Liddy do, poor little pet, when she comes home?"

"Ah, Liddy!" The mother breathed out this

name with a softened expression; here was still a last hope that had not been torn from her. Joan for her part went out of the room briskly, but stood and gazed out of the window on the landing, which looked towards the village, holding her hands very tightly clasped, and looking for the return of the messenger whom she would not acknowledge to have sent. "Ah, Liddy," she said to herself, "she'll be just such another as mother herself, and what will I do between them? but I wish old Simon would come back with some news of that boy."

CHAPTER X.

INQUIRIES.

SIMON went down to the village, stooping over his stick and laden with his big basket with a crab-like progression, which, nevertheless, was by no means slow. There were few people to be met on the road, children going to school for the most part, with whom he was no favourite, and who called out little taunts after him when they were far enough off to be safe from pursuit. He was not an amiable old man, but unless an urchin came in his way he did not attempt to take any vengeance. "Little scum o' t' earth," he would say, shaking his fist, but that amused and stimulated instead of alarming the youngsters. The village was mildly astir, wrapped in a haze of morning sunshine; the better houses opening up by degrees; the cottages all open to the sweet

yet chill air of the spring morning. At the "Red Lion" all was already in activity, doors and windows open to carry off the heavy fumes of beer and tobacco left by last night's customers. Simon went in and rested his big basket on the bar table. The ostler in the yard was making a great noise with his pails, the women were brushing and scrubbing upstairs, and talking to each other in harsh unmodulated rustic voices, and the mistress was busy in her bar arranging and dusting the array of bottles which was its chief decoration. "Is that you, Simon?" she said, and "It's just me," was the old man's answer; no ceremonial greeting was necessary. "I've brought you th' butter," Simon said. "When it's a fine colour and extra good, I like to get the credit of 't mysel'."

"You the credit," said Mrs. Armstrong; "you'll tell me next you've kirked it and washed it and printed it yoursel'."

"I've milk't it," said Simon. "There's a great art in milking. If you do it in wan way the cream's spoilt; but if ye do't in my way you see what's the consequence. Just look at my butter—it's like lumps of gowd."

"A wee too yallow for my fancy," said the

buyer. "That's beet, and it gies a taste. I'm no saying it's your fault. There's nae pasture on the fells to keep the baists without feeding."

"*My* baists," said Simon, "want for naething; there's no such sweet pasture on a' the fells as ower by the Reedbush yonder; it's that juicy and tasty. I think whiles it would be a good thing for me if I could eat it mysel'."

"Well, Simon, you're humble-minded," said the mistress. "What will you have? If ye eat cow's meat ye will want something to warm your stamack after 't. Is it true they tell me that Miss Joan's gotten a lad at long and last?"

"Miss Joan," said the old retainer; "and wha might it be that evened Miss Joan to lads or any nonsense o' t' sort?"

"Eh, what's the matter with her that she's so different from other folk? A lad's natural to a lass; and though she ca's herself a lady she's just a lass like the rest. Lady here and lady there; she's just a stout lass like any farmer's daughter aboot. I'm no speaking a word again the family."

"As well no," said Simon, darkly.

"Far better no; there's Master Harry is a

good customer—no that he takes much when he's here ; but he's for ever about the house."

"Ay, so?" said old Simon; "I thought he wasna the fine lad he used to be. So he's for ever about this house?"

"Ye're an auld ill-tongued—why shouldn't he be about this house? Is there any harm in this house? The curate himself, when he has a friend with him, he'll come to me for his dinner. The 'Red Lion's' as good a house as is atween this and Carlisle. Show you me another that is mair exact in a' the regulations, and gies less trouble. There no been so much as a fine paid in the 'Red Lion,' no since my fayther's time that had it afore us. We're kent through aw the countryside."

"I'm saying nae harm o' t' 'Red Lion.' Ye snap a man oop that short; but a gentleman he's best at home. I say to your face, mistress, as I wouldn't say worst behind your back. And if he's hanging about a tap day and night—"

"Never but the night," said the mistress of the "Red Lion," promptly. "I've never seen him in the day but passing the road; and a civil lad he is, no a bit proud, no like your oopish ways. And about the tap it's an untruth, Simon,

just an untruth, He'll take his glass; but it's not for drink he comes, it's for company. Tak' you your butter to t'other side o' t'hoose. I'll not have you down here."

"Na, Mistress, there's was nae harm meant. You ken what's thought in a country place when a lad is seen aboot a public. And lads will be lads. I reckon they keepit it oop late last nicht—keeping decent folk out of their beds."

"No a moment after the fixed time," said Mrs. Armstrong, promptly. "No a moment! I'm till a moment myself, and my master he's as exact as me. Na, na, oor character is mair to us than a bottle or twa extra. Out o' this house they all go at eleven clock of night——"

"But, mistress, ye've beds for man and baist," said Simon, stolidly. "You will not turn oot upon the street them that bides here?"

"Hoot," said the woman, with more good humour "what has that to do with Mr. Harry? He never bides here; and we've few enough lodgers. Who would come to the fells for pleasure at this time of the year? Noo and again we've got a gentleman fishing. I wonder ye don't mak' a bit o' money oot o' birds t'autumn, Simon. They say it's no that plenty at the White House."

"They say a deal o' things that they ken naething aboot—like that for wan, that they keepit it oop here yestreen till a' the hours o' t' night."

"And I tell ye it's an untruth, Simon, whoever says it—it's just a lee, that's what it is. I shut the door upon them with my ain hand. No a living soul but them belonging to t'house at half after eleven. Ye may tell that to whoever tellt you; and if I kent who they were I would hav' them oop afore the coart for slander. I would tak' justice o' them. Lies! that's what it is. Mr. Harry stood talking afore the door with young Selby maybe talking nonsense; but was that any fault o' mine? Every lad o' them a' was oot o' this house and home to their beds by the hoor named in the regulations. Tak' away your butter; I think we're wanting none the day."

"Na, na, mistress, there's nought to be vexed aboot," said old Simon. "You've got your clash about the White House, and I've got my clash q' the 'Red Lion.' There's non' o' them true; but we can give and take like friends—the best o' friends must give and take."

"Ask you that crooked body, Isaac Oliver; he was wan, and a bonnie time he would have with the

misses, or I'm mistaken. He was wan ; for I saw him waiting to speak to Mr. Harry when I shut the door. He was talking with young Selby, as I tell ye, in the street, till I wished them i' th' moon, disturbing honest folk's rest. He might have gone home and kept it oop with young Selby. I canna tell. If there's any wan as blames me it's an untruth, Simon ; and as for clashin' it's a thing I never do. Miss Joan may have twenty lads for what I care, and high time—if she's no to be an old maid aw her days, which is what the hail town thought."

"I wish her nae worse," said Simon. "I'm wan mysel'—better that than fightin' and scratchin', or to be frightent for what the misses will say—the missises in your way o' business must be terribly bad for trade."

"Well, I don't blame them," said the mistress of the "Red Lion," with a momentary preference of her own side in morals to her own side in trade. But this, it may be readily guessed, was a toleration which could not last. She was beginning to discuss the missis of Isaac Oliver, when Simon took up his basket and adopted her former counsel of taking it to the other side of the house. He had heard all he wanted ; but he made his circuit

already said ; but being a Joscelyn, although only by marriage, she felt she was at least better than anyone else. "You have to know the missis," he said, "before you can speak. She mayn't be a stirring one ; but t' house is one of t' houses as goes by itself." When he had heard their comments, and added his share to them, Simon went leisurely home. He made no particular haste, even though his basket was lightened of its load. He had accomplished his mission very carefully ; but that anyone should be especially eager about the result of it was a thing that his brain could not conceive.

In the meanwhile the time was passing very heavily at the White House. Mrs. Joscelyn had got up, after enduring the torture of lying still as long as she was capable of it, and was seated in the uneasy seat in the parlour window, gazing out, though with her work by her, with which to veil her watch should anyone come in. Joscelyn had said nothing about it last night. He had been almost conciliatory at breakfast to Joan, who thought, on the whole, that it was better to let well alone, and make no allusion to what had passed. "I will speak my mind to him sooner

or later," she said to herself; "but it comes easier when you are angry and don't mind what you say." Thus she did from calculation what so many people do against all calculation, resolving to take advantage of the next storm to deliver her soul. She and her father got on tolerably well when the mother was out of the way. Joscelyn spoke to his daughter about his farm affairs, about the prospects of his stables, and the horses upon which he set his hopes. He was a considerable horse-dealer, and she knew as much about them as any woman was capable of knowing. She was quite willing to discuss the points of the last new filly, and quite able to do so, and an intelligent critic, which her mother had never been. "If she knows a horse from a cow it's all she does," he said of his wife; and perhaps she had been sometimes a little impatient of these constant discussions; but Joan had an opinion and gave it freely. Joan ate a good breakfast, notwithstanding that half her mind was with Harry, and that she kept her eye upon the window, that she might not miss old Simon coming back—and she talked with perfect good-humour notwithstanding all that had happened. She did not care, now that it was over, about her locking-out; indeed she was of opinion that it was better not to give her father the grati-

fication of supposing that he had produced any effect upon her. But when Mrs. Joscelyn came downstairs, appealing to her with her pale face Joan's difficulties were much increased. She could not be hard upon her mother at such a moment; indeed she was never hard upon her mother. She entreated her not to make a fuss; not to take on; brought her a footstool; put out her work for her, and so went off to her own occupations again. "But bless my heart, I would be crazy before dinner-time if I were to sit with mother, and go over it and over it, and see her wringing her poor hands—poor dear!"

The last words were added after a pause, with involuntary tenderness. Joan was anxious, too, about her brother, so that a slight gleam of understanding had aroused her mind. Poor dear! to take on like that for every trifle, to take nothing easy, was a state of mind which irritated Joan; but this time it was not so wonderful. This time she was anxious herself, and there was a cause for it. Long before Simon came back she had rejected her own suggestion, that Harry must have gone to the "Red Lion." And if not there, where had he gone? where had he spent the night? She kept her eyes upon the window or the door all the morning,

darting forth whenever she saw any stranger approach, prepared to find a message from some cottage or outlying hamlet to bring her news of Harry. He would have the sense to send, she thought; surely he would have the sense to send word. He would know the state in which his mother would be. But the long hours of the morning went on till noon, and nobody came. They had never seemed to Joan so long before. She had never known what it was before to do her work with a divided interest, and on a strain of expectation. When she saw old Simon coming along the road with his empty basket on his arm and his hat in one hand, while with the other, and a spotted blue handkerchief, he wiped his furrowed forehead, a wild sense of impatience came over her. She marched out upon him, the big wooden spoon, with which she had been taking the cream off the milk, still in her hand. He thought she was going to attack him with this inappropriate but yet dangerous weapon. "Well?" she said, with a sort of gasp; "*well?*" Her fervour bewildered him, for she had been quite calm when she gave him the commission, and he stared at her with a mixture of surprise and alarm.

"Oh ay, Miss Joan, a' well," said old Simon

He had almost forgotten the occasion of his early visit to the "Red Lion;" or was it that desire to exasperate that sometimes seizes upon an old servant? It was all she could do not to seize him by the shoulders and shake his news out of him. She cried out in spite of herself, stamping her foot upon the hard road.

"What answer have ye brought? You have been out four hours, if you've been a minute. I am waiting my answer," she cried, in a strange, half-stifled voice.

"What answer?" said Simon, innocently; and then a gleam of intelligence came over his face. "I was a fool to forget. There's been nobody lodging at the 'Red Lion,' Miss Joan, if that's what you mean. The woman said nobody. He left last night at eleven o'clock; that's all she could tell me. He'll have gotten to Mr. Will's many a long hour ago. It was a fine night, and he's a fine walker. There was nothing to be uneasy about, Miss Joan."

Joan gave his arm a shake unconsciously, in spite of herself, then dropped it. "Who said I was uneasy? but you might have come back hours ago, Simon, when I told you I wanted to hear."

"Did you tell me you wanted to hear? I had the butter on my mind," said Simon, calmly. And then, of all people in the world, Joscelyn himself came suddenly in sight, round the corner of the house.

"What's wrong?" he said. "Has Simon been doing errands down in the village, Joan, or what are you wanting with him out here?"

Joan's heart swelled with a momentary impulse of wrath. It was doubtful for the moment whether she would seize the occasion and let him have her mind, as she had to do sooner or later; but Simon went on with his slow sing-song almost without a pause. "It's the butter, master. I've been down the town with the butter. Maybe you'll speak to Miss Joan no to be so particular; as if I was wan that would cheat the family. I've aye been exact in my accounts."

This was a shot that went both ways, for Simon did not like Joan's talent for accounts. He preferred to go by rule of thumb, and count out to her, so much from the "Red Lion," so much from Dr. Selby's, a shilling here and a shilling there, paying down each coin as he gave the list; whereas Joan liked it all in black and white. When he had said this he hobbled on quietly to

the back door, leaving the father and daughter together. Joscelyn looked at her with a momentary keen scrutiny. "You're sending that old fellow upon your errands: and I would like to know what they are," he said.

"If I'm not to send what errands I please, it'll be better for me to go away as well," she replied.

"What do you mean by *as well*? I'll have no go-betweens, and no mysteries here," he said.

But Joan was not in a mood to seize the opportunity and speak out, as she had intended, on the first chance. She was exasperated, not simply angry. She gave him an indignant look, and turned round without a word. Now Joscelyn was himself uneasy at what he had done. He was not quite without human feeling, and he had reflected much since upon what might have happened. He did not know what had happened; he had not mentioned the circumstance of the previous night; but his mind had not been free. He wanted information, though he would not ask for it. When his wife had let Joan in, in the middle of the night, he had supposed that Harry, too, must have crept to bed like her, allowing himself to be vanquished. That he had not appeared at

breakfast was nothing extraordinary; but even Joscelyn himself was eager to know what had happened now.

"Hey, Joan," he cried; "hey, come back, I want to speak to you. What have you done with that young fool?"

"I'm not acquainted with any young fools," she said, almost sharply, and, in her irritation, did not turn round, or even pause, but went straight forward into the house. Her father stood for a few moments switching his boots with the whip in his hand. He was uneasy in spite of himself. He did not intend any special brutality. He meant no harm to his son, only a severe lesson that should bring Harry "to heel," like one of his pointers. Above all he did not mean any scandal, any storm of rural gossip. He was alarmed by the idea of all that might be said if it were known that Harry had been shut out of his father's house, for no particular harm, only because he was late of returning home. Accordingly, after a few moments' indecision, he followed Joan into the house and into the parlour, where he found her, as he felt certain he should, with her mother. The women were clinging together, comforting each other, when he pushed the door open; and they

were greatly startled by his appearance. Joan came away from her mother's side hastily. She did not wish it to be seen that there was moisture in her eyes, or that she had actually—she, the matter-of-fact Joan—been consoling the poor feeble woman whose tendency to make a fuss had always stood between them. “Well,” she said hastily, “what is it, father?” coming in front of Mrs. Joscelyn, and standing with her back to her mother, shielding her from all critical eyes.

Joscelyn threw himself into his chair by the fire, and turned it round towards them. He had caught them, he thought. “What are you two colleaguings about? There's some mischief up, or two women would never be laying their heads together. Commonly you're never such friends.”

“If we're not friends it's the more shame to us,” said Joan.

“That's your look out; it isn't mine. *I* don't want you to be friends. You're a deal better the other way. I'll not have two of you in corners all about the place taking my character away. *I* know what that means. As soon as you've got some one to talk about, and compare notes, and conspire against——”

“Father, you had better keep a civil tongue in

your head," said Joan. "You say what you like to mother, and she cries ; but I'm not one to cry. I am as good as you are, and very nearly as old. I'll take insolence from no man. It's just as well you should hear it now ; I've promised myself you should hear it the first time I was in a passion. Hold your tongue, mother. Obedience is all very well ; but a woman of thirty is not like a lass of thirteen, and there are some things that I will not put up with. How dare you, if you are my father, speak like that to me ? I am no slave to whisper and to conspire, whoever may be. What do you do for me that you should take all that upon you ? I'm a servant without wages. I work as hard as any man about the place, and I neither get credit nor pay ; and you think I'll take all your insults to the boot as if I were a frightened little lass ; but you're mistaken. It isn't for nothing you lock the door upon your family ; and if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head——"

"Joan, Joan !" came with a feeble cry from behind. Mrs. Joscelyn had risen up with her usual gesture, wringing her hands.

"Hold your tongue, mother. I'm something more than your daughter or father's daughter.

I'm myself, Joan Joscelyn, a woman worth a good day's wage and a good character wherever I go. And to stay in this hole, and be spoken to like a dog, that's what I'll not put up with. If he likes to behave himself I will behave myself; but put up with his insolence I will not. Sit down and do your mending, poor dear; it's him I'm talking to. Now look you here, father; if ever it is to happen to me again that I'm to be watched what I do, or have a door locked upon me, or be spoken to in *that* tone——"

Joscelyn was greatly astonished and taken aback. He was not prepared for downright rebellion; but he was glad of this side-way to make an escape for himself.

"In *what* tone?" he said. "What kind of way do you want to be spoken to, hey? Am I to call you Miss Joscelyn? you're a pretty Miss Joscelyn! and beck and bow before you? This is a new kind of thing, Miss. You're something very grand, I don't make any doubt, but we never knew it till now. Tell us how you like to be spoken to, my lady, and we'll do it. There have been titles in the family; perhaps it's Countess Joan you would like, hey?"

Joan tossed her head with indignant contempt.

"I knew well enough," she said, "that for any reason or sense it was not worth the while to speak; but there was no help for it. You just know now what I think, father; and after all that's come and gone this last night, it will be more your part to leave mother and me to ourselves to get over it, than to come and try to torment us more. This is the women's room in the house; you'd far better leave it quiet to her and to me."

Here Joscelyn burst in with a big oath, dashing his fist against the table.

"The women's room!" he cried, "and what right have the women, dash them, to any room but where I choose to let them be? Lord! if I keep my hands off ye you may be glad. Women! the plague of a man's life. When I think what I might have been at this moment if I had kept free of that whimpering, grumbling, sickly creature! I should have been a young man now—I might have been a match for any lady in the county. And now, madam, you're setting up your children to face me. My mother's money last night—and who gave you a right to a penny? and the women's room, confound you all! as if you had a right to one inch in my house. By

the Lord Harry! I'm more inclined to pack you out, neck and crop, than I ever was to eat my dinner. Clear the place of you, that's what I'd like to do."

"Do, father," said Joan, "it will be the best day's work you ever did. I have a right to my parlour to sit at peace when my work's done, or I have a right to be turned out. Come, do it! You tried last night, but I'd rather go in the day. Put me to the door; it will make me a deal easier in my mind if you take it upon yourself."

He cursed her with foam on his lips, but not in a melodramatic way, and Joan cared as little for the curse as for any exclamation.

"You are enough to make a man take his hands to you," he said.

Joan grew suddenly red to the very roots of her hair. She drew a step nearer to him with her eyes flaming.

"That would maybe be the best," she said. She was a strong woman, and fearless, and for the moment the two stood facing each other, as if they were measuring their respective strength. Then Joscelyn burst into a rude laugh.

"It is a good thing for some poor fellow that you're the toad you are," he said, "not a woman.

Now, your mother was well enough ; but you're just a toad, that's what you are, and make men fly from ye ; and well for them, as I say."

"If mother's lot, poor body! comes by beauty, I'm glad I'm ugly," said Joan. "And if that's all you've got to say we've heard it before, and you had far better go to your beasts. But just you mind, father, this is my last word ; after all that's come and gone, keep a civil tongue in your head."

"What is it that's come and gone?" he asked. "Where's that boy you're hiding up and making a mystery of? where's Harry? What is the meaning of all this coming and going errands, and old Simon, and all the rest of it? Where is Harry? By Jove! I'll have it all cleared up at once!" he said, once more dashing his fist against the table.

There was a momentary pause, and the sensation of having their tyrant at their mercy came over the two women. It affected them in altogether different ways. Mrs. Joscelyn, who never braved anything, saw in it a means of mending all quarrels in a common anxiety. She made a timid step towards her husband, and put out her hand.

"Oh, Ralph!" she cried, "our boy's gone away!" She was ready, in her sympathy for him, in her sense of the shock the information must give him, to throw herself upon his neck that they might mingle their tears as if they had been the most devoted pair.

But Joan held her back. Joan looked at her father with keen eyes, in which there was some gleam of triumph.

"Lads have not the patience that women have," she said. "When they're insulted, if they cannot fight they turn their backs; that's what Harry has done. He'll never darken your doors again, be sure of that; nor would I if I had been like him, except for mother, poor dear!"

"Oh, Joan, don't say that! he's gone I know—but that he'll never darken our doors again—if I thought that it would break my heart."

"Mother, hold your tongue; my saying it will make little difference. He will never darken these doors again. You and me may see him many a day, in his own house, or with the other boys: but these doors," said Joan, "he'll never darken again. It's borne in upon my mind that it will be long, long, before Harry Joscelyn is so much as heard of here."

"Don't say that! don't say that!" cried Mrs. Joscelyn, falling back, trembling and weeping, upon her chair. She was so pale and faint that Joan's heart was moved; she went to her mother's side to comfort her, as she never would have dreamt of doing in any other trouble that had ever befallen the too sensitive woman.

Joscelyn stood and stared at them for a moment in unusual silence. The sight of Joan, always so calmly observant, more cynical than sympathetic, giving herself up to the task of consoling this weak mother, so unlike herself, struck him dumb. Joan! he could not understand it. And that Harry should have gone away had more effect upon him than he would have considered possible. He stood for a moment staring, and then he went out of the room without saying a word.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOMEN'S PART.

THERE is no doubt that the interval which ensued after this was a time of extraordinary peace and quietness at the White House. Whether it was the heart which had faintly stirred in Ralph Joscelyn's bosom, or whether he was alarmed by what he had done, it is certain that he was wonderfully subdued and silenced. When, after a long career of violence and family domineering, and threats of all kinds, one of those who have hitherto only scolded back and kept up a war of words, is suddenly stung into action, and does something desperate instead of uttering the mere froth of passion, it is not unusual to see the domestic tyrant come to a sudden stand-still, more bewildered than anyone by the result.

Times without number he had threatened to turn every son he had out of the house : but the young man who turned himself out of the house gave him such a shock as he had never got before in his life. He was very susceptible to outside criticism, for one thing, and all the county would soon find out what had happened. He would be asked on the other side of the Fells if he had any news of his son. The news would soon travel over all his haunts as far as Carlisle. People would tell each other how Harry Joscelyn had disappeared ; that he had not been able to stand things any longer ; that there had been a dreadful quarrel, and his father had turned him to the door, and he had gone away. It was a long time, however, before the real state of affairs was known, even in the White House. A few terrible days passed, terrible for his mother and sister, and in a way for Joscelyn also, who was moody and silent, going about the house more quietly than his wont, and not able to get over the shock of his surprise. Joan secretly despatched messengers to the houses of her brothers, neither of whom had seen Harry, and it was not till the third day that Isaac Oliver came shuffling to the door, desiring to speak with the mistress or Miss Joan. Joan

found a little whispering knot at the door as she passed through the passages from the dairy.

"Who is that?" she said.

"It's me, Miss Joan, Isaac Oliver, your uncle's man," said a well-known voice; and instantly there flashed upon Joan all he had come to say. Uncle Henry's, to be sure! Had she ever thought otherwise? Of course it was the most natural place for Harry to go.

"Come in this way," she said, hastily. Joscelyn was out, and there was little chance of visitors at the White House to interrupt such a conference. She led him in with a beating heart, dismissing with a word the gossiping women about the door. "I hope you're bringing us no bad news, Isaac; my uncle's an old man," said Joan, breathless. She so little knew what she was saying, in the light that seemed to flood upon her, that she did not even feel it to be insincere.

"It's not about t' auld maister, he's fine and weel," said Isaac, following her along the passage with his shuffle, talking as he went; "you would not give him more than sixty to look at him, out here and there to his dinner, and driving about the country like ony young man."

"He's very lively for his age," Joan said.

"Ay, or for any age," said Isaac, and by this time they had reached the parlour-door.

The moment they had entered that sanctuary Joan turned upon this messenger of fate and pushed him into a chair. She took no notice of Mrs. Joscelyn, who sat as usual in the distance, pretending to work, but on the watch for every wayfarer, sweeping the line of road and the grey fields and dim horizon with her anxious eyes.

"Now tell us what you have to tell us," she cried.

"It's just—I've been at Wyburgh, Miss Joan, to see t' auld maister. He's fine and weel, as I said; and Mrs. Eadie, she's fine and weel, and as pleased as they could be, baith the wan and the other——"

"Isaac, if you have nothing to tell us but about Uncle Henry and Mrs. Eadie say so at once."

Mrs. Joscelyn rose from her chair. She left her eternal mending on her seat, and came forward holding her hands together as was her wont.

"What is it, Joan?" she said, with an appeal to her daughter's understanding; she had begun not to trust to her own.

"That's just what I'm waiting to hear. It's about Harry; he's been at Wyburgh, of course, on his way to —. To be sure, mother, you know that."

"They were terrible glad to see him," said Isaac. "I said you would be sure to ken, but Mrs. Eadie she thought no, so she would engage me to come. Go over as soon as you get back, Isaac, she said to me, the mistress and Miss Joan will be real glad to hear."

"So we are, Isaac. Say away like a man, anything you can tell us we'll be glad to hear; he's not a good letter-writer, my brother Harry; we like to hear all we can. He got there safe and well?"

"I gave him a dael of advice the night before," said Isaac, "young lads is aye wanting something—again' asking a penny from t' auld maister. Mr. Harry makes a fool o' me, leddies; he's just one o' the lads I canno' resist. There's naething I would not do for him. I flew in the face o' my missis, and even o' my ain convictions, which are mair than ony woman's, to follow him to the 'Red Lion' the night afore. No, it's not a place that I frequent, far from that, no man can be more strong again' it, let alone the missis; but I

risked a dael of disgrace to gang after him there, to say to him—Ye'll no' think the worse of me, nor the mistress will no' think the worse of me, that I spoke my mind."

"And is he with Uncle Henry now, or has he—gone on?"

"To say to him, 'Hev patience,' that was all I said, 'Hev patience, and ye'll get every penny.' I hev a conviction he'll get every penny. It's a nice little bit of money, and the land's no' such ill land about Burnswark if he were to build a new house. The auld wan we're in is gude for naething, but Burnswark would be no' bad for a sma' property if he were to build a new house; and he's naething to do but to hev patience—and never to bother t' auld maister in his lifetime, that was what I said."

"You were always a sensible person, Isaac; my uncle's much obliged to you for taking such care of him. But I hope my brother Harry did not want it. Is he still at Wyburgh, or has he—gone on? Tell us, for you see my mother's anxious. We have got no letter."

"To my great satisfaction," said Isaac, "he must have taken my advice, for he went on to Liverpool the same night."

Joan nodded her head a great many times; her face was wreathed in smiles. She took her mother's feeble hands—straining themselves together as usual—into hers, and beamed upon the messenger.

"That is just what I thought! just what I thought!" she said; "far the best thing he could do, and shows his sense, mother. I could have told you from the first! Just see, now, how you torment yourself for nothing at all. I'll get his things packed and send them off this very night."

Isaac went on droning steadily.

"I'm saying nothing again' Mr. Harry, nor yet reflecting upon ony person at home. Lads are aye wanting, and they'll ask an auld uncle or aunt, or that, sooner than they'll ask faither or mither. I've seen the like o' that often, but what I said to Mr. Harry was, 'Hev patience, that's aw about it; just hev patience and ye'll get everything you want.'"

"I am sure we are very much obliged to you," said Joan; "you must have a glass of wine. Would you like port wine or sherry, Isaac? you shall have a glass of the best, and you can come up to the dairy next time you're going to

Wyburgh and take Mrs. Eadie a bit of our sweet butter. Yes, yes, I know you make it yourself, but you must not say it's as good as mine. Eadie shall have a pat all for herself—I am sure she was kind to Harry—and perhaps some new-laid eggs, they're a treat in a town."

"I take them in aw we hev at Burnswark. Ye need not trouble, Miss Joan," said Isaac, "wance a week I take in the best of everything, eggs and cream."

"Or a little honey," said Joan; "our honey off the Fells is beautiful. It's that Uncle Henry is so fond of. You shall take them a honey-comb, Isaac; and tell your wife to come up to the house and see me. There's some things would make up for the children. She's a good housewife, that wife of yours, and keeps the children always nice. You should be proud of her. She would be a credit to any man."

"Oh, ay," said Isaac, sheepishly scratching his head, "there's a many worse, there's a many worse. I'm making no complaint; but the worst of a wife is that she will never let her man judge for himsel'."

"And a great deal better for you, if your judgment was to take you to the 'Red Lion,'" said

Joan. She was gradually edging him out, suppressing Isaac's inclination to say a great deal more. "Good day," she cried, "good day," conducting him to the door. "I am very much obliged to you; and next time you go to Wyburgh you'll be sure to take the White House on your way."

When she had closed the door Joan turned round quickly upon her mother. Mrs. Joscelyn was lying back in her chair, with those expressive hands of hers lying loosely in her lap. The relief in her mind had relaxed all the nervous tightening of her muscles. She had sunk back with that softening sense of relief which makes freedom from pain no negative but an active blessedness. The pressure upon her brain, and her heart, and her very breath, seemed withdrawn. Sitting so quietly by the window, an image of domestic tranquillity, she had been a mere collection of beating pulses, of hot throbs and concussions; but now all these agitations were stilled; her heart dropped into quietness, like a bird into its nest, her blood ran softly in her veins. She smiled faintly at Joan when she went up to her, and said in a scarcely audible voice, "Thank God!"

"That's true," said Joan, "but how often have I told you, mother, that things would come all right if you would not make a fuss? The fellow was in no danger after all, not in any danger at any time, just as well off as a lad could be, petted by old Eadie, and with Uncle Henry to look after him. Of course I knew he must have been there."

"You never said it, Joan."

"No," said Joan, with a laugh rendered unsteady by the same sense of relief, "I knew it the moment I heard it, mother. I am not setting up for more sense than other folk; the moment I heard Isaac's voice asking for me I knew it in a moment, but not till then. Just see what fools we are, the wisest of us," said Joan, reflectively. "I think I've got a little sense; but I have no more than other folk, till it's put into my head. Well! it's a comfort to know his address to write to, and that he's gone to his work, and no harm done; for he has a queer temper, has Harry. He's not just like the rest of us; he might have done a desperate thing, being the kind of lad he is. That's always been on my mind. I would not have said it till now, but that was always in my mind. A lad like that, there was no telling

what he mightn't have done; but don't I aye tell you, mother, if you don't make a fuss things will always come right at the end?"

Then Joan did what was a very strange thing for her, she sat down and had a little cry all to herself. She had never betrayed the depth of her anxiety before, but the running over of her satisfaction and relief betrayed her.

"The things have come from the wash," she said; "I'll put them in and lock up his boxes, and send them to-night. He must have been ill off for his clothes, poor lad! and I might have sent them after him without losing any time, if I had only had the sense! Never mind, Eadie would do the best she could for him, and it's not a week yet. Bless me! what a week it has been! It's been like a year! I've been saying to myself all these days, 'I never knew I had so much of mother in me.' It's a funny thing, a very funny thing, how folks are made up, a bit of one and a bit of another; but I never thought I had so much of you in me, mother; I have just been as near as possible to making a fuss myself."

And it is impossible to say how much this breaking down on Joan's part, temporary as it

was, comforted her mother. She had never yet, she thought, been so near to any of her children. She began, poor lady! to pour forth her own dreary private self-tormentings.

“I’ve pictured him astray on the moors; I’ve pictured him on the Fell-side, Joan, with one of those dreadful mists coming on; every night in the dark I have thought of him wandering and wandering. I’ve heard his step going away, as I heard it that dreadful night; or in the water—if some one had come and said there was one found in the water——”

“Now, mother, these are nothing but fancies,” cried Joan; “that’s what I call just giving yourself up to nonsense. Was Harry such a fool as to lose himself on the Fells? now, I ask you, just take a little common sense! or the river? he that can swim like a duck. Nay, that goes beyond me. Reason is reason, however nervous you may be. Nay, nay, I would never take leave of my wits like that. If you will but mind what I say; don’t make any more fuss than you can help, and in the end you’ll find all will come right. Now I’ll go and put up the poor lad’s things; I can’t think what he can have done for shirts.”

Joan turned back, however, when she got to the door.

"Now, mother, listen to me for a moment. Don't take it into your head that you are just to have a letter directly and all to go well. He may take some time to come round. I would not wonder if he was offended both with you and me. What for? oh, who can tell what for? Just for nonsense, and queer temper. Don't you be disappointed if there's no word."

"I will be terribly disappointed, Joan," said the poor mother. "I am going to write to him now. Why should he be offended with me? If he does not answer it will break my heart."

"Your heart's been broken a many times, mother," Joan said, shaking her head. "Well, maybe there will be an answer, but it's always best to be prepared for the worst."

She shook her head again as she went away.

"I wonder," she said to herself, with a half smile on her face, "how many pieces mother's heart's in? it's taken a deal of breaking. We've all had a good pull at it in our day;" and then her face, with its half comic look of criticism, softened, and she added gently, "Poor dear!"

Then Joan went up to Harry's room in all

her self-possessed activity, and laid the clean white shirts carefully into the half-packed port-manteau, which stood like a kind of coffin half open in the deserted room. She looked through all the drawers, and put in everything he was likely to want. She had a very soft heart to her younger brother. There were only some five or six years between them, but a boy of four-and-twenty looks very young to a woman over thirty; she felt as if he might have been her son. Will and Tom were different. She had shared their games and such training as they had, and lived her hoyden days in their close company, with a careless comradeship, but no particular sentiment. Harry, however, had been the one who was away. When he came home at holiday times he was the stranger, the little brother, less robust than the others, a boy who had to be considered and cared for; even his mending and darning, in which she early had a share, had to be more carefully done than the others, for Mrs. Joscelyn had been jealous of any imperfection in her boy's outfit falling under Uncle Henry's, or still more Uncle Henry's housekeeper's eye. And so it had happened that a very special softness of regard for Harry had come into his elder

sister's mind. Nobody knew of it, but there it was. Perhaps the fact that he had "a deal of mother in him" had added to this partiality, notwithstanding that the mother's peculiarities had often exasperated Joan in their original manifestation. Reflected in Harry they gave him a certain charm, the charm which a nature full of sudden impulses, swift to act and lively to feel has to a more substantial and matter-of-fact nature. She packed his clothes even with a tender touch, smoothing everything with the greatest neatness, arranging layer above layer in the most perfect order. "They'll all be tossed into his drawers pell-mell," she said, shaking her head over the linen as she laid it in, with a smile on her face. She disliked untidiness next to wickedness, but in Harry it was venial. Even Harry's wrong-doings would have been no more harshly judged by Joan than with a shake of the head and a smile.

When she had finished her packing, she went downstairs on a still more congenial errand, and packed a hamper of home produce for her brother.

"Mr. Harry's not coming back; he's gone straight on to Liverpool; we're to send his things

after him," she explained to the maids, who were full of curiosity, and vaguely certain that something was wrong. They were already beginning to have their doubts as to that first fine hypothesis about Joan's lover, and to make out that Harry had more to do with the locking of the door than any "lad" who could be "courting" the daughter of the house; and they were all agog for information, as was natural. The packing up of the cheese and eggs, the bottle of cream (though that was allowed to be of very doubtful expediency), the fine piece of honey-comb, the home-cured ham, all that was best in the house, threw, however, an air of stability and reality about Harry, and suppressed the first whispers against him. There could be nothing wrong about a young man for whom such a hamper was being prepared; neither a deadly quarrel with his family, nor any trouble at his office, nor roguery of any kind was compatible with that hamper. It meant a well-doing respectable youth eating good breakfasts (always a sure sign of good morals) and coming in regularly to all his meals. The hamper eased the mind generally of the house. Joscelyn himself saw it as he passed, and, though he took no notice, was comforted too.

His uneasiness had been angry rather than anxious; but then the anger had been partly against himself, and a consciousness that humbled him of having laid himself open to criticism and made a foolish exhibition of temper, had given it a double sting. It was one of the finest hams he ever had seen which he saw packed into the hamper, and he grudged it to Harry, but all the same it eased his mind. The fellow he said to himself, had taken no harm; he was all right. He asked no questions, but his mind was relieved. When they were all put into the cart in the evening, to be taken down to the nearest station, even Mrs. Joscelyn herself came out to the door to watch them go off. It was a soft evening, the warmest that had been that season; the wind had changed into the west, the sun was setting in a glow of crimson, the whole valley canopied over with clouds full of rosy reflection. In the distance one of these rose-clouds caught the mirror of the river, and glowed in that, repeating its warm and smiling tone of colour in the midst of the gray fields of the surrounding landscape and the gray houses of the village. At the back door, where the cart was standing, the servants were all congregated as

if it wanted half-a-dozen people to put up two portmanteaus and a hamper. Joan gave a hand herself with that last precious burden.

"That's the most worth of a'," said the cook. "Ye may buy shirts and waistcoats, but you'll no buy butter like ours, nor a ham to compare with that—and my griddle-cakes, I never made better."

"It's to be hoped," said the dairy-maid, "they'll not spoil."

Mrs. Joscelyn laid her hand upon it with a caressing touch; her poor thin white hands at which the women looked half-admiring, half-contemptuous, as good for nothing but to sew a seam and play the piano. It was a kind of link between Harry and the house that had been so unkind to him. "He'll understand what it means," she said to Joan, aside, as the cart lumbered off.

Joan did not make any reply, nor did she very well understand her mother, nor know what it might be supposed to mean, but it was she who had packed all that love, forgiveness, and tender thought; which were so solidly represented in that hamper from home. And it lumbered off to the railway, and was despatched by the night mail,

though that was an extravagant proceeding; and the White House was solaced visibly and lightened of its care. It had not been a practice to give Harry such a hamper when he went away. He got one at Christmas, and that had hitherto been supposed to be enough; but this had more in it than met the eye.

And then there was a pause in the history of the house, a pause of suspense yet of hope and peace. Joan and her mother afterwards often looked back to these days, which did not last long, yet were sweet. The two were very good friends, not a jar between them, and Ralph Joscelyn was unusually quiet and subdued; and it happened that one or two visitors came to the house, a circumstance which did not often happen—touching one of whom, in this little lull of preparing events, we may as well take the opportunity of a word or two: for though nobody thought very much about him at that moment, he was a personage of some importance in the family life.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW PERSONAGE.

THE visitor to whom reference has been made in the last chapter was a Mr. Selby, a relative of the doctor in the village, who had recently come down to these regions in the interests of a secondary line of railway which was then being made. He was not a very young man, nor, presumably, a very successful one, since at his mature age, he was no more than engineer to a little local railway; but he had other qualities not unattractive. He was what the village people called "a fine-made man." He had a handsome head, with grizzled hair and beard, which, though touched by this mark of age, were otherwise very symbols of vigour and strength, so crisp were the twists and rings of

curl in them, so strong and thick their growth, It was said that there was not a navvy on the line who could lift such weights as he could or perform such feats of strength: "he would put his hand to anything." Dr. Selby was proud of his relation. "I'll back him to run, or jump, or throw with any fellow of twenty-five in the Fell-country, though he's forty-five if he's a day," the Doctor said; and he did everything else besides that a man ought to do. He was a good shot, rode well, walked well, played football even when one was wanted to make up a team, though the game is not adapted for persons of mature years. There was never much society about the White House, but Philip Selby—as he was called even by strangers, to distinguish him from the Doctor and the Doctor's son, who was young Selby—had come up repeatedly to see the horses, of which he was supposed a judge. Indeed, he went so far as to buy a horse from Joscelyn, a colt which was not thought much of in the stables when it was born. It was this selection which established a kind of friendship between Joan and the new-comer. She was standing by when the horses were shown to him, and delivered her opinion, as she was wont to do, on the subject

"You may say what you like against that brown colt: he's not a beauty just now, but I like the looks of him," Joan said, and she indicated various points in which she saw promise, which the present writer, not sharing Joan's knowledge, is unwilling to hazard her reputation on. Philip Selby caught her up with great quickness.

"I thought the same from the moment I set eyes on him," he said, and he took off his hat to Joan with a bow and smile which were unusual in these parts. She felt herself "colour up," as she said, though afterwards she laughed. The men Joan was most acquainted with thought these little courtesies belonged to tailors and Frenchmen, but to no other class of reasonable beings, and there was a slight snigger even on the part of the attendant grooms to see this little incident. Mr. Selby was invited in afterwards to dinner to clench the bargain, and lingered and talked Shakespeare and the musical glasses with Mrs. Joscelyn when the meal was over, going back with her upon the elegant extracts of her youth in a way which brightened the poor lady's eyes and recalled to her the long past superiorities of the Vicarage parlour, where it was considered right and professional

to belong to the book club, and to keep up some knowledge of the new books which were supposed to be discussed in intellectual society.

"That is an educated man," she said to her daughter, with a little air of superior knowledge which did her a great deal of good, poor lady. There was nobody else, she felt, about the White House, whose verdict would be worth much on such a subject. But *she* knew an educated man when she saw one: and the little talk brought some colour to her cheeks.

"Tut, mother," said Joan, good-humouredly; but she had listened to the talk with some secret admiration, and an amused and gratified wonder that "mother" should show herself so capable. "I am sure you are the only one that can talk about these sort of things here," she said. "Father stared, and so did I. He must have taken us for a set of ignoramuses."

"I read a great deal in my youth," Mrs. Joscelyn replied, with a gentle pride which was mingled with melancholy, "though I cannot say that it has been of much use to me in my married life; but I hope the gentleman will come back, for he would be a good friend for Harry."

This was when Harry was expected, before

the visit which ended so disastrously had begun.

And then after a few days Mr. Philip Selby *called*. Such a thing was almost unknown at the White House; the few people about who were on friendly terms with the Joscelyns, who were neither too high nor too low—and these were very few, for the county people had ignored the last generation of the fallen family, and the farmers and yeomen about were beneath their pretensions—were on very familiar terms, and would stalk straight in without any preliminaries, with perhaps a knock before they opened it at the parlour-door, but nothing more. All the other Selbys did this, marching in even in the middle of a meal without ceremony, never pausing to ask if anyone was at home. If they found nobody they walked out again, if they came into the midst of a family party they drew in a chair and sat down. But when Mary Anne, the maid who fulfilled the functions of parlour-maid, came in much flustered, with a card between her finger and thumb, both she and her young mistress felt that a very odd event had occurred, which they did not know what to think of. As for Mrs. Joscelyn it was her turn to “colour up” with pleasure. “Show the gentleman in, Mary Ann,” she

said, drawing herself up and feeling as if the world, her old world, was rolling back to her.

She gave a glance round to see if the room was nice. It was a room that was too tidy. and Mrs. Joscelyn felt it. She would have been horrified with the littered rooms which are fashionable now-a-days, but her parlour she knew was too tidy; the chairs which were not being used were put back in a straight line against the wall, and everything was in its proper place. She put out her hand and drew one of these chairs out of the line, with that gentle air of knowing better which amused Joan so much.

"This is a gentleman that is accustomed to society. I told you so, Joan."

"So you did, mother," said Joan, rising up and putting back her chair carefully. "If he is that kind of man we may as well put our best foot foremost:" and with that she smoothed the table cover carefully and lifted Mrs. Joscelyn's basket of work, which was the chief thing that made it home-like, out of the way. Joan even put away her knitting, and sat with her hands before her, which was sad punishment to herself, in order to look as Miss Joscelyn ought before the stranger. As for Mrs Joscelyn, she saw this done with a

kind of anguish ; but she was not strong enough to resist. Then Mr. Selby was ushered in by the alarmed Mary Ann, who, instead of announcing him as she ought, said in a frightened tone, "Here's the maan," and vanished precipitately with such an attack of the nerves that she had to go and lie down upon her bed. Very soon, however, he put them both at their ease. He found Joan's knitting laid away on the top of the work basket, to which Mrs. Joscelyn directed his attention by frequent wistful glances at it, and said he was sure it was this she was looking for, though Joan's anxious desire had been to look at nothing. And then he sat and talked. Joan could scarcely contain her wonder, and amusement, and admiration at this talk. After a few minutes her fingers unconsciously sought the familiar needles which restored the balance of her mind, and made her free to listen. She was not young, nor had she any air of being young. Her figure was trim and round, but well developed, ample and matronly, though not with any superabundance of flesh. She had a pair of excellent serviceable brown eyes, with a great deal of light in them ; not sparkling unduly, or employing themselves in any unauthorised way, but seeing everything,

and making a remark now and then of their own, which an intelligent spectator could not but be interested by. The way in which she turned those eyes from her mother to the visitor and back again, with that surprise which made them round, and that amused gratification which came the length of a smile upon her opened lips, opened with wonder and pleasure, was quite a pleasant sight. She was more like an innocent mother listening to the unsuspected cleverness of her child's opinions, than to a daughter admiring her mother. Now and then, when Mrs. Joscelyn said something unusually fine, a little snap of a cough came from Joan's parted lips. She was astonished and she was delighted. "Who would have thought mother had so much in her?" she was saying all the time. She was not in the least handsome; but there was nothing in her that was unpleasant or objectionable; not a harsh line, or a sharp angle, or a twist of feature. Sometimes there is a curve at the corner of a mouth which will spoil the harmony of a face altogether; but Joan had no defect of this kind. She had a dimple in her smooth, round chin, and another in her cheek. When she laughed there were two or three other lurking pin-points which made

themselves visible about her face. Her eyes were delightful in their surprise. She had a great deal of smooth, brown hair, brushed to the perfection of neatness, which was wound in a thick plait round the back of her head. Altogether, though there was no beauty about her, she was such a woman as gives comfort to a house from the very sight of her; a woman of ready hand and ready wit, and plenty of sense, but no more intellect than is necessary for comfort—which perhaps is not saying very much. Her presence in an empty house would have half furnished it at once, and she could say her say on all subjects she knew. About that brown colt she had formed an opinion of her own, which, as his chimed in with it, appeared extraordinarily sensible to Philip Selby: and she knew as much about all farming operations, and especially those which were connected with her own sphere of the dairy, as any farmer round. She was not, as the reader has perceived, a woman at all timid about her own opinions, or unwilling to express them. But when Mrs. Joscelyn and the new visitor talked about literature, and the pleasures of reading, Joan listened with open eyes and lips, and a broad smile of ignorant and admiring

pleasure. "Think of mother talking away thirteen to the dozen! and who'd have thought she had all that in her," Joan said to herself.

As for Mrs. Joscelyn, her cheeks were pink all the evening after, and her eyes quite bright. "I have not had so much conversation for years. Dear, dear! how it does one good, after never seeing anybody that has ever opened a book, to get a good talk with a well-informed person! I hope Harry will take to Mr. Selby," Mrs. Joscelyn cried; "what a chance for him, Joan! a man that really knows; and will give him such good advice—and so good for Liddy, too, when she comes home." Joan acquiesced in all this, with a laugh.

"It was as good as a play to hear you," she said, "and me gaping all the time, saying to myself, 'I never knew mother had so much in her!'" At this Mrs Joscelyn drew herself up a little; but she was not displeased with the praise.

"I read a great deal when I was young," she said. Papa always insisted upon it. You have not had my advantages, Joan; but you have strong sense, my dear, which, perhaps, I never had."

"I daresay I will do, mother," said Joan, with another laugh. She admired her mother's

cleverness with a kind of amused delight ; but the idea of being less valued than her mother did not enter Joan's head. It made her laugh, with a comfortable sense of practical superiority. "I'll do," she repeated, smiling broadly, all the dimples showing in her cheeks. She had a good deal of colour. Mrs. Joscelyn's fragile looks and elegant extracts were alike out of Joan's way.

After this Mr. Philip Selby came several times. Joan always assisted at the interviews in the same pleased spectatorship. It occurred to her after a while that the information of the talkers was not very extensive. She seemed to hear the same names over and over again—almost the same remarks—which reduced Joan's admiration, and made her feel that perhaps after all it was only a way they had, and did not imply the profound erudition she had admired so much: but still it was finer talk than anything she had heard before. Then Harry, came interrupting these elegant conversations. Harry did not think anything of them at all ; he had no literary tastes any more than the rest of the family. He was not at all given to reading, and the consequence of Mrs. Joscelyn's recommendation to him of Mr. Philip Selby, and his society, resulted in a strong dislike on Harry's part to Mr. Selby, and desire

never to see him again. Young Selby was Harry's friend, a young man who was not good for very much; and he also had the strongest objection to his cousin. There had not been much heard of Mr. Selby while Harry was at the White House; but just after the luggage and the hamper had been sent off, and when peace had for a little while returned, he came to pay one of his usual visits. And perhaps it was that Mrs. Joscelyn was pre-occupied; perhaps that Mr. Selby had something on his mind. The conversation flagged. Joan, who now never made any attempt to put by her knitting, and permitted her mother's basket to exhibit its store of mending freely, took notice of a long pause that occurred in the talk, and she hastened to do what she could, in her straightforward way, to fill up the gap.

"Mother's had a deal to think of lately," she said. "I think she should take a nap in the afternoon. Many are a bit drowsy after dinner. I think it would do her a deal of good if she were to put up her feet upon the sofa, and take a bit of a doze."

"Joan," cried poor Mrs. Joscelyn, wounded in her tenderest feelings, "when did you ever see me doze?"

"There," said Joan, promptly, "that's just what I say. It would do you a deal of good. You were always one for keeping up; but 'a stitch in time saves nine,' and you've had more to think of than ordinary. Just you close your eyes a little bit, and I'll talk to Mr. Selby. He'll not mind for ten minutes. They tell me you're getting on wonderfully with the railway; and is there enough of travellers from Wyburgh to Ormsford to make it pay?"

"I have my doubts," Selby said.

"I have more than doubts. I hope you have not got money in it. There is no traffic, nor manufactories, nor anything like that. Just two or three farmers, and ordinary folk, and potatoes, and such like, and milk-cans; but nothing to keep up a railway. I've often wondered, now, a clever man like you, what made you take it in hand?"

"I am very glad you think me a clever man, Miss Joscelyn. I'm afraid I haven't much to say for myself. They offered me the job, and I took it. If I hadn't taken it, somebody else would; and it is not my affair. I am making it as good a piece of work as I can. Perhaps something else may come of it," he said.

"Well, I hope something else may come of it," said Joan, "for your sake. I don't think very much will come of it, itself. It's fine making roads when there is somebody to walk upon them: and the Fell country's a fine country—but perhaps not fit for railways. You see," said Joan, "there never can be much of a population; you can't break down the hills, and sow corn upon them. One line straight through, that stands to reason—but I would have nothing to do with more, for my part."

"What you say is very sensible, Miss Joscelyn. What do you think of Brokenriggs as a bit of land? They tell me it has a good aspect, and is capable of being improved—"

"Brokenriggs? you are not taking the railway there? Oh, you were meaning in the way of farming? It's a good enough aspect, but it's cold soil. Speak to old Isaac Oliver about that, and he will tell you; it's not a generous soil. You put a great deal into it, and take little out; that's what I've always heard. Indeed, I've seen it for myself, as you may too, any day, if you turn down by the old tower—what they call Joscelyn tower, you know; but the house is a very poor place; I hope you were not thinking of it for yourself?"

"It was for—a friend," said Selby, with a smile.

"Then tell him no; I would not recommend it. There's another place. It was once in our family, so I've always heard; but we are people, as I daresay you know, that have come down in the world."

"Have had losses—like—so many people," said Selby. He was going to say Dogberry, but the words woke no consciousness in Joan's eyes.

"So many losses, that we've got little left. It is about ten miles from here, Heatonshaw. It's a nice little property, and a house that could be repaired: they say it was once the Dowerhouse in our family when we were grander folk. A nice bit of pasture," said Joan, with enthusiasm. "I have always thought if I could turn out my cows there, there would not be butter like it in all the North country. There is not much to better my butter anyhow, I can tell you—though I say it that shouldn't," she said, with a little pride, then laughed at herself.

"And this—what do you call it, Heatonshaw? is a place you would like for yourself."

"Dearly," said Joan, "I was telling you—there's no better pasture; a bit of meadow, just

as sweet as honey, and all the hill-side above. And there's a good bit of arable land lying very well for the sun. I have heard of great crops in some of the fields; I cannot tell you how many bushels to the acre, but you will easily find out. And if your friend has a taste for a dairy—that's what I could give my opinion upon."

"There is nobody whose opinion he would sooner take," Selby said, and as he did so he looked at Joan in a way that somewhat startled her. It was not such a look as she had been in the habit of seeing directed to herself. She had seen other people so regarded, and had laughed. Somehow this gave her an odd sensation, a sensation chiefly of surprise; then she felt inclined to laugh also, though at herself. Bless us all, what had the man got into his head? surely not any nonsense of that sort! It so tickled Joan that she felt herself shaking with laughter, to which she dared not give vent—and she turned her eyes upon her stocking, which was the last thing she ever looked at, lest an incautious contact with someone else's should produce an explosion of mirth.

"Are you rested now, mother?" she said, "I'll have to go presently and look after Bess." Bess

was the dairy woman, who had no head for anything, but was Joan's dutiful slave.

"I was not so tired as you thought, Joan," said Mrs. Joscelyn, half aggrieved, "I have been doing my work, as you might see—"

"Now, mother, that is a real deception ; when I thought you were taking a doze, and was entertaining Mr. Selby with country matters, to let you get your rest ! however when there's a question of farms or the lie of the land, or anything like that, I may take it upon me to say I am better than mother, though she's far cleverer than me," said Joan, laying aside her knitting. Selby got up to open the door for her, which was an attention quite unusual, and increased the overpowering desire to laugh with which she had been seized.

"I wonder if I might ask to see your dairy ?" he said in a low tone, detaining her at the door.

"Not to-day," said Joan, briskly, "I never let anybody see my dairy but when it is in prime order ; and we are busy to-day."

"I am sure no dairy of yours is ever in anything but prime order," he said, with another look that completely overpowered Joan's gravity. She almost pulled the door from his hand,

shutting it quickly between them, and ran off, not to the dairy, as she had said, but to her own room, giving forth suppressed chokes of sound at spasmodic intervals as she flew upstairs. Joan's was no fairy foot, but a firm substantial tread, which made the old stairs creak. When she got into the shelter of her own chamber, she threw herself into a chair, and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. "The lasses have been true prophets after all; I believe I have gotten a lad at last," she said to herself. But even when her fit of laughter was over, she did not venture downstairs, or near the dairy, until she was certain that Philip Selby must have taken himself away. She bustled about the room, looking over clothes that wanted mending, and "tidying" drawers which wanted no tidying, still pausing now and then to give vent to another laugh; nothing so laughable had occurred before in Joan's career. She had been asked in marriage by an enterprising "vet" when she was a girl, a poor fellow who had not considered the daughter of a man who was an evident horse-dealer to be so very far above him, but who was all but kicked out of the house by Ralph Joscelyn, and his long-legged sons. Joan had never heard of

it even, till after the episode was over, and though she was duly indignant at his presumption, she had felt rather an interest in the man himself, hoping to hear for some time that his disappointment had not affected his health, or interfered with his career. But the "vet" had found a more suitable match, and all had gone well with him, which utterly ended any little bit of romance she might have had a capacity for. Since that time Joan had not had any "lad." Everybody who was good enough for a Joscelyn to marry, was too good for Ralph Joscelyn's daughter, and though she was homely she was proud. She could work like a dairy-maid, but she would not have married beneath her. Besides, she was not a marrying woman. There is such a variety of the species, just as there is a non-marrying man; and the more independent women get to be, no doubt the more this class will increase, though it is in a very small minority now. Joan was not at all independent in means, but she was independent in her character, and her work. There was no one to interfere with her in her share of the labours of the establishment. Her mother did not even understand what that work was, and her father, though he

was a bold man, did not venture to interfere. She had everything her own way, and guided the house in general according to her will, notwithstanding an occasional outburst, which she soon quieted, on her father's part. Having thus a great deal to do, a position of weight, and domestic authority, an absolute sovereignty so far as it went, why should she have wanted to marry? She did not; and it was the sentimental consciousness of Selby's looks that was too much for her gravity. "Just like a dog when it's singing music," said Joan to herself. When she went down to the dairy Selby was gone, and Mrs. Joscelyn all uncomprehending seated alone in the parlour. Her mending (which she was always doing; never was a man who wore out his under-clothing so!) required her eyes and her full attention, not like Joan's knitting; she had never even seen those looks which Joan called "sheep's eyes." But Joan herself was much on the alert afterwards, and fully foresaw what was going to happen if she did not take care; and, indeed, notwithstanding all her care, something did happen, as will be seen, within the short space of two days.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSAL.

THE White House had begun to be slightly agitated by the expectation of letters from Harry, when Mr. Selby came again. There was no immediate acknowledgment of the arrival of the boxes, or reply to the letter which Mrs. Josce-lyn had written instantly, as soon as they heard that he had returned to Liverpool; but this both mother and daughter thought was natural enough. Harry no doubt would be sulky; even his mother and sister would be included in his anger against the house, though they had done nothing which he ought to have taken in ill part. He was not a great letter-writer, however, and they were both indulgent to Harry, and willing to give him a little time to get over his "pet," as Joan called

it. Joan took the whole matter cheerily. He was only "in a pet." He had been "in a pet" before now, and had kept his mother uneasy, refusing to write; but it had gone off, and all had come right again. No doubt it would be the same now: only this time he had some reason for his "pet," and might be excused if he was a little sulky. "You know, mother," said Joan, "Harry's terrible young for his age. He's just a baby for his age, and he has a deal of you in him. We must let him get over his pet."

"Oh, Joan, do you think I would keep anybody anxious that was fond of me?" said Mrs. Joscelyn, "but," she added, with a sigh, "nobody would care very much if it was only me. It is this that gives you all the pull over me, that I care, and you don't."

Joan could not contradict this; and there gleamed over her a momentary compassion for her mother, whose lot it seemed to be always to "care," while nobody cared for her. "You must try and not care so much, mother. We're none of us worth it," she said, "but, as for Harry, he's just in a pet. Leave him alone, and he'll soon come to himself. My fine ham! I wouldn't have wasted it on a person that didn't deserve it. If

he don't write within the week, I will say he's not worth the salt it's cured with; but we'll give him a week; by that time he'll come round, if he's a bit sulky just at first. I don't blame him, for my part."

Mrs. Joscelyn's hands had crept together, and clasped each other, with that earnest appeal she was always making to earth and heaven: but they slid asunder hastily when she met Joan's eyes. She was thankful to allow that it was quite reasonable that Harry should be sulky. "Though he might have thought a little upon me. He might have thought I would suffer most of all. He might have remembered how little I can do, and that I must support everything," she said to herself, with a few quiet tears. She did not venture to say it even to Joan, though Joan was so much more sympathetic than she could have hoped. Nobody ever thought of anything she might have to suffer. Perhaps on the whole she was supposed to enjoy it. "Making a fuss," was one of her specialities in everybody's opinion. Her children were all disposed to think it did not matter very much what the object of "the fuss" was. And thus she was left in her parlour with her mending, a woman surrounded with people

belonging to her by nature and the dearest ties, yet altogether alone, as lonely as any poor old maiden in her garret. Nor is this any unusual thing ; a fact in which the solitary may find a little uncomfortable alleviation of their special woes.

Mr. Selby came back while the house was in this state of expectation, not anxious as yet, but on the eve of becoming so. He did not send in his card now, but usually presumed so far as to go straight to the parlour door by himself, where he always knocked, however, before entering. This time, he came in the morning, when he knew Joan was not likely to be in the parlour. He was a little nervous, though perhaps it would be too much to say that his heart beat. After forty, a man's heart requires a very strong inducement to make it beat, that is to say, in any violent manner. But he was a little nervous, and half ashamed at what he was about to do. He went doubtfully to the dairy door, which was standing wide open. Inside Joan could be seen moving briskly about, and her voice was very audible in not very gentle tones. Selby paused a little, and listened to it with a comical concern upon his face. His brow contracted a little with anxious care, though his

mouth laughed. Joan was scolding, nothing more or less. "Talk to me about not having time!" she said, "You have time to dress yourself up, and go out to court your lad, night after night. Is that what you call your duty to your neighbour? My word, if your lads were your neighbours, you would keep the commandments easy. Did ever any mortal see such bowls, to be in a Christian person's dairy? Woman! where do you expect to go? A dairy's not a dairy if the Queen of England might not eat her dinner off every shelf in it, and give a prize for every brick. That's what makes the butter sweet, not your lads, or the tricks that you play. Get out of my sight! I could take my hands to you, if I did not think too much of myself."

Philip Selby stood in the yard with a comical look on his face, and listened. Was it fright? There could not be the least doubt that Joan was scolding violently, and even using threats of personal violence, to the lass, who, half in sorrow, but more than half in anger, was sobbing in the background. The very sound of her foot and its rapid tap upon the floor, was angry, and scolded too. He paused, and a look of alarm came over his face. The Joscelyns were known

for hot tempers all over the county. Ralph Joscelyn was a man whom people avoided any sort of argument with on this account, and all his sons shared, more or less, his disposition. What if Joan shared it too? It was alarming to a man bent on the special errand which had brought Selby here. Perhaps the doubt was not romantic, but, on the whole, neither was the errand. If she should say to him, "Get out of my sight!" if she should threaten to "take her hands" to him in any domestic difficulty, it would not be agreeable. He stopped short in the yard, where old Simon was cleaning his milk-pails; through the dairy window the milk-bowls were visible, ranged in perfect order, and a glimpse of Joan's trim substantial figure, passing and re-passing, with no sort of languor about her, such as is supposed to encourage love. The would-be lover had a visible movement of doubt. He caught old Simon's eye and blushed, though he had long supposed himself to be past blushing, and gave an uneasy laugh, which sounded shy, though it was twenty years, Mr. Selby thought, since he knew what the word meant. Old Simon was a man with a very wandering eye, an eye to be spoken of in strict correctness in the singular

number. One of them he always kept upon his work, the other moved about, finding out everything that was unwilling to be seen ; this time he perceived Mr. Selby's sentiment at the first glance.

"Ye needn't be feared," he said, taking one hand from his pail to wave it in the direction of the dairy, "ye needn't be feared. She's not a lass to be feared for, our Miss Joan. Her bark's worse than her bite. Bless you, not the hundredth part of that she don't mean."

Philip Selby felt more alarmed still. That a woman should scold when she meant it, that was supportable ; but when she scolded, not meaning it, that indeed was something to be frightened for. The smile upon his mouth became a nervous one. He faltered in spite of himself.

"Lord !" said old Simon, turning his head aside, "six feet high, and na mair heart than that. Is that what ye ca' a man ?"

"Hist !" said Selby, beckoning him close ; he had half-a-crown between his finger and thumb, "is that, now, a thing that happens very often ? Tell me the truth, and I'll make it worth your while."

"Terrible often," said Simon, with a grin of

derision, "most days—and twa or three times a day."

"And how do you manage to live with her?" said the panic-stricken suitor.

"We cannot bide her out of our sight," said Simon, his grin growing more and more disdainful, "naething goes right when she's—away. You may make what you like out o' that. It's what they ca' a paradox at the night school.

And he went off clashing his pails against each other in a manner which caught Joan's keen ear, as she paused for a moment before the open window. "What are you doing with those pails?" she said; "have all the folk about the town gone out of their wits to day? Do you not know, Simon, that you started all the hoops last summer, and brought us in a bill as long as my arm? Bless me, can nothing be done right in this house, unless I put to my own hand, and do it myself?"

"Hear to her!" said Simon, tranquilly, taking no other notice of this energetic address, "you can see for yourself. She's often like that, less or more."

At this moment there came the sound of a laugh from within. "It's Mr. Selby, I declare,"

said Joan, "to see the dairy! and all in such disorder, ye lazy, big, soft—I told you I would let nobody in unless we were tidied up, and we're not tidied up, not a bit; but you'll have to come in, I suppose, as you're here. Step in; we must not grudge the welcome, since its all you're likely to get. I'm in a passion; that's the fact," said Joan, with a laugh, "I'm raging like a bull of Bashan. You heard me as you were coming through the yard, I make no doubt; and that's how I have to go on very near every day."

"Oh no, Miss Joan!" said the lass who had been bearing the brunt of the storm; and Selby, looking round, saw that this aggrieved personage was grinning from ear to ear.

"That's just your deception," said Joan, "that's trying to get at my weak side. When they get a laugh out of me, they think no more about it; and it's far too easy," Joan added, shaking her head with comical distress, "to get a laugh out of me, far too easy; but don't you think it's fun, for I am as serious as I can be," she cried, turning round upon the culprit, who flew to her work with an alacrity which showed Joan's admonition to be not without effect, though she was cramming her apron into her

mouth all the time, that she might not laugh. Joan took Selby all over the dairy, and showed him everything. She was an enthusiast in all that concerned this portion of rural work. She took him out to the fields behind the house afterwards to see her pet cows. It was a breezy spring day, the sun shining, but the wind blowing, and cold though sunny. Joan went out with the light shining in her trim and smooth brown hair, and without a thought even of a shawl. "Cold? oh no, I'm not cold," she said, "I don't trouble hats much, if it is not in the height of summer, when you can really say there's something like a sun. This doesn't count; there is no headache in it," said Joan, looking affectionately at the temperate ruler of the day, who makes no unnecessary show in the North. "But you might catch cold," suggested the middle-aged lover. "Bless us," said Joan, "me catch cold! why, such a thing was never thought of; I've seen a fuss made about Harry for taking cold; but never me. The air on the Fells never gives cold. It is your fat damp air in the level, it's not our hill air that ever does any harm."

"I am trying to think that, too. I am tired wandering about the world with a regiment of

navvies," said Selby; "I'm thinking of settling down."

"That's not a bad thing to do; but you must have led a cheery life roaming about the world as you say. I don't know that I would like it myself; but change is lightsome. You must have seen a deal in your day," said Joan, looking at her companion. And as she did so she could not but allow that he was a very "wise-like man." It would be difficult to give in other words the full force of this phrase. It does not mean good-looking, or respectable, or tall, or wealthy, or well-dressed, or well-mannered, but it means all of these together. And Philip Selby was a little more—he was really handsome, though he was no longer young.

"I have seen a great deal in my day," he said, "and my day has been a good long one, for I've been afloat upon the world for more than twenty years; but I don't know that I ever saw anything so much to my mind as I see to-day—a fine, breezy hillside, and fine cattle, and a thriving country, not to say somebody by my side that——"

"Oh, you need not reckon me," said Joan; "there's women in all countries. It's a great pity there's so many of us; we would be a great

deal more thought of if there were but a few."

"Perhaps you would be angry," said Selby, "if I said there were not many like Miss Joan Joscelyn, wherever a man may go."

"Oh, no, far from angry," said Joan, with a laugh. "I should think it was a very nice compliment; compliments are not common things in our parts. You that have been about the world you know how to flatter country folk—but among the Fells they're but little known. Look at that beast now," she said, stroking tenderly the face of a great, soft-eyed cow, "did you ever see a bonnier creature? There's not a lady in all England has such a balmy breath. And she's better than she's bonnie. She's a small fortune to us. And that little thing, that's one from France, of the Brittany kind, small feeders and good milkers; that belongs to our little Liddy. You have never seen Liddy, Mr. Selby? She's the pet of the family; and when she's not here we make a pet of her little cow. Some are fond of Alderneys, some like this French breed. Which do you like best?"

"I have no opinion. I am no judge. I know a horse when I see one, but not a cow. I like the kind, Miss Joan, that you like best."

"Well," said Joan, laughing, "our tastes agree in some things. You remember that brown colt? The last time I saw him he was just what I expected—turning out a fine beast, far better than that Sister to Scythian that father set such store upon. I think you and me were right there."

"I am sure we were right," said Selby; "two heads are better than one. Do you know, Miss Joan, I think our tastes are very likely to agree. I have been to see Heatonsshaw—which was the place you said you would dearly like yourself."

"Did I say I would dearly like it? That was strong. But it's a bonnie place, there is little doubt of that."

"I think it is a sweet place; and a house that would just do for—I've something more to say to you, Miss Joan, if you will have the patience to listen. A wandering life is very pleasant for a time, but as a man gets on in years he wants to settle down. But," said Selby, lifting his hand to stop her, for she was just about to interrupt him—and putting a great emphasis upon the word, "*but*—not by himself. He must have somebody to settle down with him, or it's no settling at all."

"That's true," said Joan, with great external

sobriety, though the demon of laughter with which she had fought so severe a battle during their last interview had sprung again into life within her, "That's very true. You'll have to get a wife; but you cannot be at much loss about that, Mr. Selby, for women are plenty—more's the pity. There's no place you can go but you'll find them in dozens. Men are real well off nowadays, they have nothing to do but to pick and choose."

"That would be very nice if anyone would do," said Selby, with a countenance the gravity of which contrasted strangely with the twinkle in Joan's eye and the quiver about the corner of her mouth, "but I should not be content to pick and choose. The thing is, there is only one that I want. If I cannot get her, another will not serve my purpose, which is what you seem to think. Miss Joan, I know yours is a fine old family, much above mine, though the Selbys have always been respectable. You may think it presumptuous in me to ask you, but to tell the plain truth it's you I want."

"Me you want?" she cried, a little confused—for though she had seen what was coming, and had been quite prepared to make a joke of it, and even now scarcely dared to meet his eye lest she

should laugh, the seriousness of the actual proposal bewildered her a little when it was made. She did not think it would have been half such a serious business. Joan, though she was not shy, and had treated the whole matter as a great joke up to this moment, cast down her eyes in spite of herself, and was confused, and for a moment did not know what to say.

"It's just you I want," said Selby; "you are the one I've had my eye on since ever I came into the Fell-country. When first I saw your face, I said to myself, 'That's the woman for me.' You see, I was on the look out," he added, with a smile. "I have put by a little money, and I had some from those that went before me. There's enough to be comfortable upon, especially if the wife had a little of her own. And neither you nor me would like to be idle. You could set up your dairy, with all the last improvements, at Heatonshaw, and there would be plenty for me to do on the farm. I think we could make a very good thing out of it, and yet keep up a very pleasant position. I would never be against seeing friends, and you would have no need to exert yourself, but only to be the head of everything, and keep all going. I could see my way to a

neat little carriage for you, or even a riding horse if you would like that—and as to allowances and so forth, even if you had nothing of your own——”

“I’m thinking you’re going too fast, Mr. Selby,” said Joan. The laughing spirit was exorcised. She no longer felt any inclination to burst forth into that *fou rire* which comes at the most inappropriate moments. He had sobered her by his own perfect sobriety. Joan felt that this was a grave business affair, and not a frivolous piece of nonsense inappropriate to her serious years. Some lingering wish, perhaps, to hear a real love tale in her own person had been lurking in her mind along with the certainty that she would laugh at it if it were told. And many ludicrous pictures had come before her when she first espied Mr. Selby’s “intentions.” She had wondered, with a comical mixture of inexperienced faith and cynicism, whether he would go down on his knees and call her by all sorts of endearing names. She was bursting with laughter at the sentimental personage who intended to make a divinity of Joan Joscelyn. Nevertheless, perhaps, she was a little conscious, secretly and underneath all, though she never acknowledged it to herself,

that this was the way in which a woman had a right to be addressed once in her life—Joan Joscelyn as well as another. But that was a very great secret, and deep down ; so deep that she had never confessed it even to herself. And now she was out in all her calculations, and there was nothing sentimental to laugh at. It was a very sensible sort of bargain that was proposed to her, and she did not know where to find a word against it. Her laugh came to an entire end. "I'm thinking," she said, "that you're going too fast."

"It lies with you to say that," said Selby; "but, Joan, remember" (he had given up the Miss, and she perceived it), "that what I am saying I'm ready to do, and it's only for you to say the word. I've thought of it since ever I saw you. 'That's the woman for me,' I said, and you know how we agreed about the colt. We agree, too, about the place. I went to look at it because you said you would like it, and I like it, too. And we're both partial to the same kind of life. If we couldn't get on together I don't know who should. And in everything else I'll do whatever you please."

"You miss out one thing, Mr. Selby," said

Joan, "we ought to be partial to each other as well as to the kind of life."

"Well, I am," said Selby, fervently; "that's the truth. I can't speak for you; but *I* am. I'm partial to your looks and your ways, and everything about you. I like the way you sit still and knit, and I like you in your dairy and out here. You're just all I want as far as I can see. I like you when you're scolding. I was a little bit frightened at first; but afterwards I liked that as well as the rest."

"Well, you're a bold man to be partial to a woman when she's scolding," said Joan, a little mollified; "but I don't know much about you, Mr. Selby, and I can't say I'm partial to you."

"That's because you don't know me," he said promptly; "make as many inquiries as you like, I am not afraid of them. You'll find I have a good character wherever I've been. I don't see why I shouldn't make you happy as well as another. I've nothing behind me that I'm ashamed of. You and I at Heatonshaw, with plenty of beasts in the stables, and the house furnished to please you, and a bit of a phaeton in the coach-house: I don't see why we mightn't be very snug

together," he said, "and as he spoke he took Joan's hand, which, though a little red in the fingers and brown on the back, was a shapely hand notwithstanding all her work. Then she was seized all at once, and without warning, with that *fou rire*.

"If you mean courting, Mr. Selby, it's a bit public here," she said, discharging a load from her breast in that peal of laughter. He was a little offended for the moment; but then he comforted himself that laughing was near to crying, and that crying would have been a very good sign indeed. At his age he had a little experience more than falls to the lot of a youth at the ordinary love-making age.

"I hope you're not just laughing at me, Joan."

"I'm laughing at myself as well—and at you too. I'm old to have a lad, and I never looked for such a thing—and you're old," Joan added. "I think you're too old for me."

"I am forty-one; which is not a bad age. Just suitable, I think," he said.

Then she looked at him again with the laughter in her eyes. He was a very "wiselike" man—nothing to be ashamed at, whoever saw him—very

good-looking indeed ; more satisfactory in that way than Joan felt herself to be. And Heatonshaw was a pretty place ; and a house all of her own was better than a house in which her father might interfere arbitrarily every day, or even her mother change all the arrangements some fine morning in a fit of absence or compunction. She turned round and began to walk towards the house, suddenly becoming serious. Selby turned too and walked with her. He did not say a word as they went over the fields and through the garden of the White House, but waited her pleasure in a deferential way which went to Joan's heart. But she was not "partial" to him. "We can talk of this some other time" was all that she said.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOAN AND HER LOVER.!

JOAN said nothing to anyone about Philip Selby's proposal. She had, indeed, no one to consult on such a subject. She had grown up in the habit of indifference to her mother's opinions, which originated partly in the difference of their dispositions and the superiority a calm temperament has over a nervous and anxious one, and partly in her father's contempt of his wife, which her children resented, yet were influenced by. Seeing the number of times when Mrs. Joscelyn was unhappy, and excited as Joan thought about nothing, it was almost impossible for the strong-natured and composed young woman not to feel a certain affectionate and sometimes indignant contempt for the excess of feeling which gave so much trouble, yet never had any result ;

while, on the other hand, it is almost impossible for a man to treat his wife with systematic scorn without weakening the respect of her children for her, even when, as we have said, they resent his conduct and are more or less her partizans. At the best she was "poor mother," a person to be defended and accounted for, not looked up to and trusted in. From her early youth Joan had been her own guide and governor. She had none of her mother's sentiment; her mother's standard was too high for her; her mother's feelings overstrained and exaggerated. Among the multitude of "fusses" she was partly disgusted, partly amused, ready to take mother's part, as has been seen, but always with a protest against the weaknesses which she could apologise for, but not understand. In the matter of Harry, as she shared in some measure the anxiety, she had in some measure understood the sentiment; but her attitude towards her mother was more that of a senior towards a junior, the stronger to the weaker, than the natural subordination which would have become their relationship. Joan knew that, had she consulted her mother about Mr. Selby, Mrs Josceylyn would have been greatly excited. She would have questioned her daughter

as to her love for her suitor, and his love for her, and all the sentimental questions, which Joan felt were well enough in books, but as far as regarded Philip Selby and herself were altogether out of the question. And as for mentioning such a subject to her father, nothing could have been more impossible. She was thus alone in her moderate and sober soul, as Mrs. Joscelyn was in her tender and somewhat excitable being. She could not tell her story to anyone with the hope of aid and guidance—who can? We are all alone when the great problems of life come upon us. Joan, however, thought of this question very soberly, without once regarding it in the light of a great problem. It excited her a good deal privately within her own composed bosom; but, to tell the truth, its first effect was more mirthful than serious. In the seclusion of her own being she laughed, saying to herself that after all the maids had been right, that she had “got a lad” when she was least thinking of it. The laugh was not without a touch of gratification in it, for it is true that a young woman, even when she reaches the mature age of thirty and gives herself out as beyond such vanities, still likes to have “a lad,” and to feel that she is

like the others—"respectit like the lave," not left out in this important particular of life. Joan was pleased with Mr. Selby that he had appreciated her. She thought the more of him for it, as has perhaps been already perceived. She had an honest consciousness of her own value. She knew what she could do, and what her services were worth in the not very satisfactory position she held in her father's house, where she had the responsibility of everything without either the approbation or the reward to which such work as hers was entitled. And she knew, without any misplaced modesty on the subject, that she would make an excellent wife. But being thirty, and in her own opinion very homely in appearance, and evidently not appreciated in this way, Joan had, with a half-conscious contempt for the fool of a man, whoever he was, who had not "come forward," and a secret laugh when she thought of it, even at this contempt—put that contingency out of her mind and taken it for granted that she was to be Joan Joscelyn till the end of her days, the manager and soul of the establishment at the White House. If it occurred to her sometimes—as of course it must have done—that the White House could not continue for ever under

its present *régime*, and that the day would come when Will's wife (and a bonnie hand *she* would make of it!) must reign in her stead, the idea in no way troubled her; for she knew that no circumstances could arise in which she, Joan Joscelyn, would not be well worth her salt. But now, when she had no thought of any such want, when she had put it entirely out of her mind, here had happened the thing that she thought would never happen! She had got "a lad." Suddenly the monotonous future in which she had foreseen no change opened before her, showing the pretty little property she had always admired, the place which had once belonged to the Joscelyns; the pasture which was the sweetest in the countryside; the nice house with its sunny aspect, so different from the White House; the best of beasts in the stables, and even the phaeton in the coach-house. It is the greatest wonder in the world that women are not demoralised altogether by the constant possibility of such sudden changes in their existence. From day to day it is always happening. A poor girl, who has been trained to all the pinchings and scrapings of genteel poverty, will suddenly see wealth before her, and consideration, and importance, all in a

moment, offered to her acceptance without any virtue of hers. We ask a great deal in asking young women to be wholly insensible to this chance which may happen at any moment to any one of them, and of which everyone knows instances. It was not anything so magnificent which had suddenly fallen in Joan's way; but it was a great change, an offer as important as as if it had come from King Cophetua; far more important indeed, for sensible Joan would have made short work with his majesty. This, however, was the most sensible, the most suitable of arrangements. It was exactly what she would have liked had she exercised the widest choice. The perfect appropriateness of it even subdued the inward mirth with which the idea, when it first presented itself to her mind, had been received. Though she still had a laugh now and then, it was gradually hushed by this conviction. "I thought I might had a waur offer," she would say to herself now and then. She was like the heroine of that song. Her "braw wooer" was not without a touch of the ridiculous about him. She was disposed to jibe at his good looks, and his politeness, and his fine talk; but notwithstanding:—

"I never let on that I kent or I cared,
But I thought I might had a waur offer, waur offer,
I thought I might had a waur offer."

Joan was no singer; but it was astonishing how often that refrain came from her lips about this time. She was no singer; but she was a woman who sang at her work, as women used to do more than they do now. Perhaps drawing-room performers sing all the better because our ears have grown more particular; but of all cheerful things in this uncheerful world there are few so pleasant as the half-conscious song with which a cheery worker accompanies his or her occupations. Joan was always giving vent to some snatch of homely music in this way. But at the present moment she confined herself to that refrain: "I thought I might had a waur offer, waur offer. I thought I might had a waur offer."

"You are always singing that, Joan," Mrs. Joscelyn said. "I never hear you sing anything else."

"Am I?" said Joan, with a laugh; and then she grew red, and grave and silent all at once. It was so suitable! Nothing could have been more appropriate. But then, "I'm not partial to him," she said to herself.

This would have been more on her mind, however, and probably would have come to a more rapid conclusion, if it had not been for the increasing uneasiness about Harry. He did not reply to his mother's letter; the "course of post" in which she had begged to be answered was far exceeded.. *That* they had not thought much of; but when day succeeded day and no letter came, Mrs. Joscelyn became daily more unhappy, and Joan was more disturbed than she would allow. Even Ralph Joscelyn himself, finding out, no one knew how, for he was not in the habit of interesting himself in the family correspondence, that there was no news of Harry, began to be seen looking out for the postman, and keeping a watch upon the countenances of the women and their communications together. He was uneasy as he had never been known to be before. When he was found to share that anxiety about the post which was so habitual to the others he looked confused, and murmured something about the Sister to Scythian and a bargain which had fallen through. Then his disquietude got so great that he spoke—not to his wife, whose constant wringing of her hands, and drawn countenance and anxious eyes called from

him continual bursts of abuse—but to Joan, who, daily becoming more and more anxious herself, was exasperated by them also.

“You have word of that lad, I suppose?” Joscelyn said.

“No, we have no word.”

“He’s a young devil,” said his father, “he’s putting out his temper on you.”

“You’ve always set him a good example in that way,” said Joan, promptly; “maybe he is, and maybe not.”

“Hold your dashed tongue,” said Joscelyn; “what else could it be?”

“How am I to answer you if I hold my tongue? There’s a many reasons possible. He may have made up his mind to write no more to a house he was turned out of.”

“Stuff and nonsense! he was coming in at a disgraceful hour, and the door was locked, at a time when every honest door is locked.”

“I’m glad you can ease your conscience in that way,” said Joan; “it was at no disgraceful hour; all the boys have been out later, you’ve been out later, many’s the time, yourself. He may have made up his mind as I say,” she added, distinctly, “to disown the house as his

home, at which I for one would not wonder: or he may," and here her voice faltered, "he may—and that's what I fear—have gone off as lads do——"

"Rubbish! blanked nonsense!" cried the father, but his ruddy countenance paled a little. "What do you mean by going off as lads do?"

"I cannot tell you," said Joan, with sober disdain, "if you don't know."

"It's just a dashed story you've got up," her father said.

"It's no story at all, for I hope it isn't so, and I don't know what it is—but to my mind that's the most like. I wouldn't put it into mother's head for all the world, poor dear!"

"Dash you!" cried Joscelyn, "you are finely taken up with your mother. I never saw the like before; you have been easy enough about your mother and all her whining and complaining. What makes you set up this dashed nonsense, enough to make a man sick, now?"

"I never minded before," said Joan, "maybe more shame to me. I'm very anxious about Harry myself, and that makes me understand the trouble mother's in, poor dear!"

"Dash you and her too! It's all the blanked

nonsense he's got from her, the young idiot!"

"That's true: he has a deal of mother in him, poor lad!" Joan said, drying her eyes.

Joscelyn lifted his hand, and clenched his fist as if he would have given her a blow.

"You're all a set of —— —s!" he cried, launching furiously forth into the kind of eloquence which was habitual to him; but furious as he was, and brutal, there was a keen arrow of pain in his heart too; he was angry with himself. He could have beaten himself with that big fist. What a fool he had been to expose himself, to put it in the power of any lad to expose him! There was nothing he could not have done to himself in the rage of self-reproach and shame which had come upon him. It was a little for Harry—he was not unnatural, and he had a feeling for his offspring—but it was much more that he had laid himself open to the remarks of the county, and every friend and every enemy who might like to gossip about him and say the worst that there was to say.

Perhaps there was a little satisfaction in Joan's bosom at the sight of the disturbance in her father's. He deserved to be disturbed. She was glad that he should suffer, that he should get

in some degree the recompense of his ill-doings. But this was only a transitory diversion to the painful strain of her thoughts. The waiting was hard to bear. How their hearts beat when they saw the postman approaching along the dusty road, and there was a terrible moment of doubt as to whether or not he would turn up the path to the White House! And when he came there was a still hotter excitement as Joan, with fingers which never had trembled before, turned over the letters. She could not trust herself to speak, but only shook her head, looking at her mother at the window. How many days? It seemed to have been going on for years, not days, this intolerable suspense, which, though it was unbearable, had to be borne. Only about a fortnight had elapsed, however, when there came a packet with the Liverpool postmark. It was a large one, and seemed to contain so much that for the first moment Joan scarcely noticed that the address was not written in her brother's hand. She took it into the parlour, her heart beating loudly, and broke open the envelope, while her mother, trembling, hurried to her side full of eager joy. There tumbled out upon the table, however, four or five closed letters, all addressed

to Harry—and nothing more. Then it was that Joan turned the envelope and looked at what was written upon it: and only then discovered that the packet was addressed to Harry, and bore the stamp of his office. Mrs. Joscelyn's letter was among the other contents. Harry had never received it. The two looked at each other blankly, turning over the letters which had fallen on the table with trembling hands. It was like touching something dead.

"What does it mean? Oh Joan, what is the meaning of it?" Mrs. Joscelyn said.

Joan turned them all over again, aghast, almost stupid in her dismay. "It means he has never got your letter, mother; then how could he answer it, poor lad?" she said, with a keen impulse of angry despair.

This seemed reasonable enough in the first stupefaction; but afterwards the mother gave a lamentable cry. "Why did he not get it?—why did he not get my letter, Joan?"

"He has not been there, mother." Joan spoke in a low tone of terror, as if she were afraid to trust the air with that too evident conclusion—for where, if he were not there, could Harry be? Then she examined the outside envelope over

again with anxious futility, as if that could give her any information. Written inside the flap was the request, "Please acknowledge receipt." The envelope bore the office stamp. All was done in the most business-like way. She had seen Harry's letters come to him in exactly the same envelope when he was at home for one of his holidays. The inference that he was still at home, that all was peaceful and well, and his letters forwarded to him in the usual course, overpowered Joan, calm as she was. A few great tears, looking like large raindrops as they pelted down upon the letters, fell from her eyes in spite of herself. "There never was such a fool as I am," she cried with a hysterical laugh, "I'm worse than mother or anybody. What's so wonderful about it? He's gone to London or somewhere, having still his time to himself—why should he have gone back to the office and spoiled his holiday. That would just have been—preposterous." This big word gave her a certain relief. It seemed to take some of the weight off her heart as she brought it out. "Preposterous," she repeated, looking almost angrily at her mother. "You might see that, without asking me."

Mrs. Joscelyn gazed at her, half carried away

by this outburst of what looked like argument ; but then she sank into a chair and wrung her hands, and began to weep. "Oh Joan, where is he, where is he, if he is not there? What has happened to my boy?"

That was a terrible day to everybody concerned. Joscelyn himself came in under pretence of wanting something, and seeing the letters lying on the table stooped to look at them with a face which grew very dark in spite of himself. He looked at the women, one seated crying in her chair, the other standing stupefied, staring about her, not knowing what she did.

"Has he come back?" he said, the words escaping him in spite of himself.

And these two who had been under his rule so long, the timid, feeble wife, the sober-minded daughter, rose, as it were, and flung themselves upon him. They who had been so voiceless hitherto, fell upon him like a hail-storm, taking him by surprise, beating him down with a sudden storm of wrath and reproach. His wife, who had never ventured to say her soul was her own ; who had lain still, weeping and terrified, allowing him to be the master on that night when all the harm had been done ; and Joan, who had

borne his fury so often with stolid composure, making no reply. All the pent up grievances of years he heard of now, with an astonishment, to hear their opinion of him, which was equal to his stupefaction at their rebellion. Even the harshest domestic tyrant finds it difficult to face the fact that he is a terror to his surroundings, still more that they see through his external bigness, and know him to be at bottom a coward and a bully. Joscelyn was absolutely cowed by this revelation. He tried a few volleys of oaths, like those which usually forced them into silence; but without effect. He raised his voice and thundered; but they did not care. It was Mrs. Joscelyn who led this attack.

“Come back?” she cried; “he will never come back—how dare you stand there and look at his letters that are like his graveclothes, and ask ‘Has he come back?’ You that have driven him from his home—that have turned his sweetness into bitterness; that have driven my boy from me, and broken my heart. Oh, you may shake your fist at me! What do I care? what do you suppose I care? Do you think I mind if you killed me? You have done far worse; you have driven away my boy, and in all the world

I do not know where he is. Oh man, get out of my sight. I cannot endure the sight of you. I cannot endure the sight of you!" she cried.

And Joscelyn stood aghast. He was pale at first, then a purple flood of rage came over him. "You dashed old witch—you miserable blanked old cat—you ————" He caught his breath in his consternation and fury. He did not know what to say.

"Oh, what do I care for your swearing," she cried, with an almost majestic wave of her thin white hand. "Go away, for God's sake, go away—what are your oaths and your bad words to me? I'm used to them now. Many a time I have been terrified by them; but you can't frighten me now. What do they mean?—nothing! I am used to them; you might as well save yourself the trouble. I am not afraid of anything you can do. You've done your worst, Ralph Joscelyn; you have driven away my boy, my boy. Oh Joan, where is my boy?" the poor woman cried, turning from her husband with another indignant wave of her hand, to her daughter, with whom she never had been linked in such tender and close union before.

"By ——!" cried Joscelyn, "I'll teach you, madam, to defy me. Your boy, as you call him, had better never show his face again here. *Your* boy! if you come to that, what have you got to do with one of them? They're *my* children, and you're my wife, and it's me you've got to look to and take your orders from, you dashed old wild-cat, you blanked old ——!"

"Oh, hold your tongue, father!" Joan cried, turning her head in angry impatience. "Mother's quite right, we're used to all that."

What could a man so assailed do? He could not get over his astonishment. He remained finally master of the field, in so far that they left him there volleying forth those thunders which they disdained, and saw to be nothing but words. Joscelyn recognized with the strangest humiliation that they were but words, when his women, his slaves, first ventured to let him know that they saw through him, and found them all to be froth and emptiness. If somebody had discovered Jove's thunderbolts to be but fireworks, the Father of the Gods must have fallen to the ground like an exhausted rocket. Joscelyn felt something like this. He came down whirling from his imaginary eminence, down into an abyss of

emptiness and darkness, and struck blankly against a real something which resisted him, which he could move no longer. He was not without feeling, and he became suddenly dumb as they closed the door, leaving him a much discomfited hero in possession of the field. Rebellion in his house, his slaves emancipated, the boy lost, and the whole story likely to be published over the length and breadth of the county, and himself exposed to every petty gossip and critical assembly in it. This was a terrible downfall for such a man to bear.

That day messengers were sent off to Tom and Will, who came in haste, thinking it was a funeral to which they were summoned, to hear all the tale, and to give their solemn verdict against their father. *They* were not afraid of him now; they could swear themselves almost as fiercely as he could, and he did not overawe them as he used to do.

"The governor oughtn't to have done it," Will said to Tom.

"He ought to have had more consideration," Tom replied. "It doesn't do to treat young fellows so; I wouldn't have put up with it myself, and no more will Harry."

"If we've seen the last of him," said the other, "we know where to lay the fault."

There could not have been a more complete family unanimity on this point at least.

CHAPTER XV.

NO NEWS.

BUT neither Will nor Tom had any suggestion to make, or knew what to do in such an emergency. They thought it might be well to write to the office and ask what was known of him, or to his Liverpool lodgings; and for themselves, they were anxious to get back to their own homes, their wives, and their work. Even before the afternoon was out they had so far exhausted the subject of Harry that they were not unwilling to join their father in an examination of the Sister to Scythian, and "pass their opinion" on her, and the high hopes Joscelyn entertained of her. Joan looked on at this change of sentiment and subject with a half understanding and half bewilderment. In other family troubles before this she too had been glad to

escape from the monotony of a painful subject with a half scorn and whole impatience of her mother's persistence in it, exactly like the sentiment her brothers showed now. Only this time her own heart was profoundly engaged; she felt like her mother, and along with her comprehension of the feeling of "the boys," had a perfectly new and bitter sense of their heartlessness, their stupid indifference, their desire to escape from this one thing which was more important than anything else in earth or heaven. What was the Sister to Scythian in comparison with Harry? And they had all allowed that Harry's disappearance was a serious matter: they had not deceived themselves, or made it out to be some "nonsense of mother's." This time they had been obliged to confess there was grave cause for anxiety; and then they had gone to the stables with the father whom they had been unanimous in blaming, and had given all their minds to the points of the horse. Joan had never been given to investigating the feebleness of human character. She would scarcely have understood the words had they been suggested to her, or, at least, would have treated them as too high-flown for ordinary meaning; but for once in a way the wonder was

brought home to her, and she saw and understood it. "The boys" were sorry about their brother, sorry that such a thing should have occurred; annoyed that their domestic affairs should thus be thrown open to the public, and more or less sympathetic with their mother, though not quite sure that it did not serve her right for making a favourite of her youngest son; but when they had expressed these feelings, what more were they to say? They could not go on talking about it for ever; they could not bring Harry back if they talked till doomsday; and besides, when once their opinion was expressed and their regrets said, Harry was not a subject of very great importance to them—whereas the Sister to Scythian might advance the interests of the family and make the Joscelyn stable celebrated. And Joan understood it all, she knew it by herself; yet was angry with a harsh and disappointed pain which all her reason could not subdue. Mrs. Joscelyn in the parlour, absorbed in that one passion of anxiety, did not even appreciate this failure of the interest of the others in what was so great a matter to herself so much as her daughter did.

"What do the boys say? What do they

think we should do?" she asked Joan a hundred times. "What shall we do? Oh! Joan, what do they think we should do?"

"They are not thinking anything about it, mother," Joan said. "They are off to the stables, looking at that beast. They are more taken up with her than with Harry. An ill-conditioned brute! I wish, for my part, she was at the bottom of the sea; but set a horse before the men, and they think of nothing else—if all the brothers in the world were perishing before their eyes."

"Miss Joan," said a voice behind her, "I am astonished to hear you say that; you whom I have always taken to be such an excellent judge of a horse yourself."

The two women turned upon the newcomer with mingled feelings, half angry that he had intruded upon them, half excited by a sudden wild hope that a stranger might have some new light to throw upon a subject which they had exhausted, for they could not hide their trouble from him. Mrs. Joscelyn could not speak without an overflow of tears, and even Joan's eyes were red, and there was that look of irritation and vexation and impatience in her face which

comes so naturally to a capable person suddenly set down before a painful difficulty which she can see no way in her experience of coping with. Selby looked at her with anxious eyes. Was she angry with him? but, if so, there was a sudden gleam of expectation in her face too, suddenly looking up at him, as if she had said within herself, "If help is possible it is here—" which gave him courage; and he hastened to explain with that look and tone of sympathy in which strangers so often excel those who ought to be the natural consolers.

"I see I have come in at a wrong time," he said. "I knocked, but I suppose you did not hear. I ought to go away, but I want to stay: for you are in trouble, and if I could be of any use to you——"

"Mr. Selby is—a true well-wisher," said Joan, looking with almost timidity at her mother. She was not given to blushing, but she blushed now all over her face and her throat, and made such an appeal with her eyes as those eyes had never made before. "It will be best to tell him," she said: "he, maybe, could think of something; and what is the use of trying to hide it? it will soon be all over the country-side."

"Indeed I am a well-wisher," he cried; "if I can do anything, I will do it with all my heart. If it's about your brother Harry, I've heard something—" and he looked from Joan to Mrs. Joscelyn with eyes so full of sympathy that they felt the look as a sick man feels a cool hand laid upon his hot forehead.

They told him their story with anxious questions as to what he had heard. He had heard, of course, a great deal more than there was to hear, that Harry had come to blows with his father, that there had been a struggle and a fight, and that the young man had been kicked out of the house. Some added that he lay on the Fells all night, so much injured was he; and there were whispers of vice on Harry's part as the cause of such a violent proceeding, which Selby was too wise to betray to the poor women. When they had told him all they knew, he sprang up to his feet and looked at his watch with an air of readiness and capability which at once gave them hope.

"It is quite clear what must be done," he said; "you must send somebody to Liverpool at once, this very night. It's too late for the mid-day train, but the night one will do."

"Send somebody to Liverpool!" Joan's countenance flushed again while her mother's grew pale.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Joscelyn, "but who can we get to go?" while Joan, who had never been beyond Carlisle in her life, stood up unconsciously with such a gasp as catches the breath after a sudden plunge into the sea. She knew nothing about the world, and she belonged to a generation which believed that a woman could do nothing out of her own home; but a rush of blood came to her face, and of tremendous energy to her heart. In the suggestion there seemed so much hope, although almost as much fear.

"Who will you get to go? Me if you like," said Selby, with the benevolent glow of a man who feels himself a sort of good angel to women in trouble. "I have nothing very particular to do, and I have a pass on the railway, and I'm used to travelling. I will go to-night, and come back to-morrow night. You will hear sooner that way than any other way, and it is far easier to make inquiries personally than by letter—and far more satisfactory."

The colour left Joan's cheek; there was a little falling back of relief, yet half disappointment, from the sudden alarmed temerity of impulse that

had come upon her. She looked at him with, in the midst of her trouble, a faint—the very faintest—touch of a smile at one corner of her mouth. “Aha, my lad! I know what that is for!” Joan said to herself, swift as lightning; but even the interested motive thus revealed was not displeasing to her, and the whole suggestion went through her mind like an arrow on the wind, showing only for a second against the dark atmosphere of anxiety within.

“Oh, Mr. Selby, how could I ask you to do that for me? How could I ever repay you for such kindness?” Mrs. Joscelyn cried, wringing her tremulous hands. There was no complication of ideas in her mind. She was bewildered by the suggestion, by the offer, by this unexampled effort of friendship. No one had ever offered her such a service before. To imagine that it was for the love of Joan that it was offered to her did not enter her mind. She knew no motive possible, and it filled her with astonishment—astonishment almost too great for hope. A journey was a thing which, in her experience, was only undertaken after great preparations and much thought. To go to-day and return to-morrow was a proceeding unknown to her. And then why should he, a

stranger, not belonging to her, undertake such a journey for her? and how could she repay him? She had not even money to pay his expenses if she could have offered payment, and how was she to make it up to him? In this strait she turned her eyes anxiously upon Joan, who was standing by, silenced by an agitation such as had never been seen in her before.

"It is far, far too much trouble," Joan faltered. "If I could go myself ——"

"You!" cried the mother, upon whom the weakness of her sex and its incapacity had always been strongly impressed. "Oh, what could you do, Joan? what can a woman do? They will not even let a woman into these offices—or so I've heard. Oh no, no, not you—and it's far too much, far too much, as you say, to ask—"

"You are not asking," said Selby, beaming. "It is I who am offering to do it. I should like to do it; it would give me pleasure. You need not fear I will say anything to hurt his feelings. I will act as if he were a young brother of my own. As for the travelling it is nothing, and it will cost me even next to nothing, for I have my pass, being engaged on the railway. Not that I make much of that—for if it cost me ever so

much I should be all the more glad to do it, Mrs. Joscelyn. To ease your mind I would do anything," he said, and this time he glanced at Joan with a corner of his eye; but with meaning enough to make it very distinct to her prepared intelligence. And at the corner of Joan's mouth, that infinitesimal curve, became for a second almost a dimple. How could she help seeing through him?—but she was not displeased.

"And if I find any difficulty in tracing him," said Selby, a little carried away by his enthusiasm, "I will engage a detective—"

But at this Mrs. Joscelyn threw up her hands with a sudden paleness, and almost fainted; while Joan looked at him with a sternness that made the heart of her suitor tremble, as it had done for a moment when he heard her scolding Bess in the dairy.

"Do you think my brother is a lad that should have the police set after him?" she said.

"It is not the police," said Selby mildly; but they were ignorant of all modern habits in this way, and the suggestion was so great an offence to them, that it nearly took away all their gratitude and hope in the proposal he had made. He was

prudent enough to say no more about it ; but took Harry's address at his lodgings and at his office, making careful note of everything in a way that went to Mrs. Joscelyn's heart. Her courage rose as she saw him make these notes. They looked like something doing, an effort which must come to some result. To-morrow early this good friend would be on the spot ; would see with his eyes and hear with his ears everything that could be heard or seen ; and she could not doubt that he would bring light out of the darkness. Her tears dried as she looked at him ; the feeble wringing of her hands was stayed—they clasped each other instead with a tremulous patience and almost steadiness. Never before had there been a reasonable being like this, kind and sympathetic and understanding, to stand by her in any of her troubles ; it seemed an almost miraculous goodness to the heart-broken woman. And Harry must hear reason at the hands of such a man. If he did so much for her, surely he would do more for Harry. She was comforted beyond measure by the very sight of him as he stood and took down the address. And that he should be willing to do so much for *her*, seemed miraculous to her. She could not think of any other reason for his kindness.

As for Joan, she was consoled too, partly by gratitude like her mother's, but partly also by her insight into Selby's real motive, which her mother did not guess. Her brow and her eyes were very grave and heavy still with anxiety; but the dimple remained at the corner of her mouth. She saw through him very well; he was not generous or disinterested, as her mother thought. She knew his motive. And Joan was not sure yet that it would do him any good notwithstanding her gratitude. She was by no means free from a little sidelong sense of that knavery which is common enough in such matters. She meant to accept, as far as this went, his self-devotion, but she was not sure that the hopes he was building upon it might not be fallacious hopes, and secretly entertained in her inmost heart a half-determination to cheat him yet, and prove him wrong in his reliance upon the services he was going to render her. But mingled as this process of thought was, it was on the whole exhilarating. Her heart rose a little. She thought more of herself as she caught a glimpse of herself in Philip Selby's eyes, and as her self-esteem received a sensible stimulus, her hopes increased with it. The more we think of

ourselves the more sure we are that good and not evil will happen to us. There is nothing more terrible in misfortune than the depression and sense of demerit which it brings with it. Joan thought better of herself through the spectacles which Selby provided, and she could not help feeling an incipient certainty, not altogether new to her, that with a person possessing such qualities as hers all must go well.

Fortified by these hopes, the mother and daughter saw Tom and Will depart with equanimity.

"Well, mother," Will said, as he shook her by the hand (North-country people are not given to demonstrations of affection), "I hope you'll soon have word of that boy. You needn't fret: we've been in a good many scrapes, but we've always got safe out of them."

Will was the best fellow of the two. Tom took it altogether more easily.

"Yes, yes, you'll hear," he said; "I'm not the least afraid. Harry's like the ill-penny that always turns up. There's nothing that I can see, to fret about."

Joan nodded to them when they got on their horses with a friendly satisfaction to be quit of them. She had no ideal to be offended in her

brothers. Mrs. Joscelyn, when her momentary buoyancy of new hope was over, felt bitterly to the depths of her foolish heart that her sons were of a very common, selfish grain, such as some years ago it would have broken her heart to think of. She had been drilled into it, and had yielded to necessity; but still when something made her observation clearer she remembered and felt the downfall. The slow coming down of heart and hope by which a woman arrives at the fact that her child is not ideal, nor even excellent, nor superior in any way to the coarsest common *pâte* of man, is very gradual. Perhaps the greater number do not reach it at all, but are content to deceive themselves and think all their offspring right and perfect. But Mrs. Joscelyn was not of this kind. She could not get over her sons' indifference. "Another man going out to bring me news—taking all that trouble—a stranger that is nothing to us—and my own boys, my own boys caring nothing." Over this again the poor soul, faithful in all the devices of self-torment, shed a few bitter tears.

"Now, mother, you are beginning to fuss again," said Joan, in a vexed tone. "Dear, dear, haven't we trouble enough?" Even she who

shared the real family grief so warmly thought this one of "mother's fusses," and was impatient at her folly. "As if everybody didn't know that Will and Tom were just—Will and Tom," Joan said to herself. That they had turned out to be so instead of being heroes, did not strike her as a subject of complaint.

Mr. Selby was gone three days. The mission he had undertaken soon showed itself to be more difficult than he thought. Harry had gone away without leaving a trace behind him. He had appeared at the office for an hour or two quite unexpectedly before his leave had expired, and paid a few small debts, and taken away some small articles which were in his desk, disappearing again without a word as to his destination. At his lodgings Harry had not been seen at all. His portmanteau was there, forlorn in the dusky lobby of the lodging-house, and the unfortunate hamper, out of which odours not altogether delightful were proceeding, and which the mistress of the house implored Mr. Selby to take away with him. He did not know what to do: finally, but with great secrecy, that his principals might not be offended, he put a detective on Harry's track, such as it was. But there seemed no track, not so much as a

circle in the water or a footprint upon the soil, to show where he had gone. Selby had gone to Liverpool with great confidence in himself; pleased, for he had a good heart, to please and console these two women; but also pleased, for his own part, to show at once how kind and how clever he was. He had not a doubt that he would succeed and go back triumphant, and prove himself so superior to all the clowns about, that Joan could have no further hesitation; and it was in this confidence, being so sure that the work he had taken up would be prosperous, that he had set out upon his mission. But when he returned his mind was very different; he was greatly depressed, not only with the sense that what he had to tell was unsatisfactory, but that his own prestige would be seriously impaired. He had left home with the conviction that he would find everything out and set everything right; that neither would adverse fate be able to baffle him in the wisdom of his investigations, nor Harry be able to resist his brotherly-fatherly representations. And when Philip Selby found nothing but a blank void, in which there was nobody to persuade and remonstrate with, he felt himself tumble down from the vantage ground which he had thought so certain.

How was he to go back and say he had failed ? His detectives had indeed done their best to buoy him up with hope ; but he was obliged to come back with no news, presenting a very blank countenance to the anxious looks of the mother and sister. The first sight of him sent their hearts down, down to the very depths.

“He is not there, Mrs. Joscelyn; but I hope soon to hear news of him,” he said deprecating, as if it had been his fault—which was not the satisfactory position he had hoped to hold in coming back.

And then the fact had to be faced in all its simplicity. Harry had disappeared. The firm could throw no light on the question. They did not know where he had gone, nor why he had gone. He had gone honourably, that was all, had got payment of the salary which was due to him, and had settled various little debts which he was owing. Nobody knew anything of larger liabilities, if he had them. He was gone absolutely, without leaving a trace behind. His employers were surprised by the inquiries, not giving much importance as yet to the fact that he had exceeded his time of leave ; but they could give no information, and satisfy no anxiety. He was gone,

that was all about it. The whole tale was written in Selby's face to the two anxious women who had awaited him with so much hope.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT CAN'T BE CURED MUST BE ENDURED.

ALL great evils are more intolerable, more terrible, before than after they come. It seems to us in advance as if the mind could never accustom itself to such a change, or life close over the wound. And yet, when but a very short time has elapsed, we find that obedient Nature has accepted and acknowledged the inevitable fact, and that use and wont, so rent asunder by the change, have begun to throw new fibres of their cobweb tissue over the chasm. There was a moment when poor Mrs. Joscelyn thought that she could not bear this rending asunder. She turned her face to the wall and closed her eyes, and declared that she could not endure the light. She lay thus for weeks, but

not in any stupor; on the contrary, with every sense alert, and all standing sentinel, hearing Harry's step in every sound outside, and divining him in every whisper of the wind. She had no objection to the detective now, but was kept alive from morning to morning by the news which Selby brought her, scraps of news entirely delusive, but which kept a fire of agitation and expectation alive in her heart. Selby spent a great deal of money upon the detective with little use, an expense which neither Joan nor her mother divined or thought of. To them he had said at first that he had left a "friend" on the spot to pursue the inquiry, and they had not doubted his statement. But by-and-by there came a time when the expenditure seemed to him no longer necessary. He was not rich, although he was sufficiently well-off, and it was doing no good, neither in respect to Harry nor to Joan, who was short and sharp with him in her angry grief, and seemed almost to blame him for the catastrophe altogether; and, indeed, Joan was unreasonably sharp. She could not help asking within herself what was the good of a man if he could not do as much as this? She felt sure that if she had gone herself she must

have discovered something ; and she began to get sick of the sight of Selby coming up to the White House morning after morning with his no news. It provoked her entirely without reason ; his long face provoked her. If he would but stay away and hold his tongue when he could do no good ! She was all the more unjust to him, perhaps, that she had secretly built upon his success almost as much as he himself had done, and had felt that it would justify anything that might follow out of gratitude for such a service. But the service had not been accomplished, though it had cost more trouble and expenditure of one sort and another than if it had been successfully done, and not only was Joan very miserable about her brother, but she was thrown out altogether in respect to the suitor, who had, she grudgingly allowed to herself, established a certain claim upon her by his efforts, even though he had not been successful. She was very difficult to get on with, all the household acknowledged, at this period. A lover might well have been alarmed had he heard her voice lifted high in the dairy, and in the house, setting everything in order. Woe to the maid who neglected her work in these days, or

the man either. Joan came upon them like a thunderstorm; there were times when Selby, stalking up to the house with his bulletin, heard her and trembled. If this was how she was going to be, would it not be wiser in a lover to give up such a dangerous pursuit? But though it gave him a cold shiver he persevered, and took her sharpness gently, and bore with her unreason, having a soul above his judgment. There were times when this little conflict going on within him, and the trial of his faithful purpose over all doubts, was visible in his countenance, betraying Joan to a momentary amusement in the midst of her irritation and trouble; and she would be still sharper to him afterwards—then break into a short laugh within herself. It was her only diversion in her trouble to see how Selby got frightened and swerved, and then took heart again.

"I'm enough to give any decent man a fright," Joan said to herself, with her half laugh; and it was true that she led the household, as all the maids said, "a terrible life."

But Mrs. Joscelyn lay with her face to the wall, and moaned by times: but generally listened, listened, night and day, her whole being con-

centrated into her ears. She got a kind of monomania on the subject. He seemed to her to be always coming home, on the road, drawing nearer and nearer. Joan, dozing in a chair by her bedside, when she was at her worst, she would wake up suddenly and implore to go down to the door and look out.

"Somebody went by and stopped, I am sure he stopped—and looked to see if there was any one up. Run down, run down, and open to him, Joan!"

Joan did it a dozen times at least, and standing at the open door in the middle of the night, looking over the black invisible country, or into the pale moonlight which revealed it in a vague whiteness, would shed a few tears, and feel the night wind go chill to her heart before she shut and locked again the door that had been once closed upon her brother.

"Oh, there's a deal of mother in him, the Lord have a care of him!" Joan would say: and going back again, add: "There was no one, I knew very well there was no one; I went to humour you. Now just you humour me and go to sleep, go to sleep, poor dear!" and she would smooth the pillow and the bed very softly for all her scolding.

It was a dreadful day, the day on which the portmanteau came back, and the hamper, which smelt so badly, and which was now a half rotten mass, not fit even for the pigs. To see them coming in the cart from the station was like a funeral; the very horse went slowly, though he was wont to break into a clumsy canter as soon as he came within sight of his stable. Even the dumb beast felt it, old Simon said; and the man got the things out very quietly, and carried them up to Harry's room with solemnity, as they might have carried his coffin. Joan unpacked all his clothes again as she had folded them, with her tears falling like rain. She put them back in his drawers with many a dismal thought. Would he ever come back to find them all there waiting for him? or was it over for ever, and would Harry never enter the house again? The arrival of these relics increased Mrs. Joscelyn's sufferings so much that the doctor had to be sent for, who made but one prescription, succinct, in one word: "Liddy:" for he knew the family well, and all its members. Joan clasped her hands together as the thought struck her. "And me never to have thought of that! It shows the head I must have," she said.

And this was how it came about that suddenly, without anyone knowing of it, one afternoon when Joan had been absent for an hour or two, there arose a sudden commotion in the house, a clanging of doors, a sound of voices, a rush up the stairs of something that was between the flight of a bird and the blowing of a brisk wind and the patter of airy steps—a movement, and a sentiment of fresh life, and arrival, and new hope. It was not a noise, the creature was too light, too melodious for that: her step scarcely touched the stair, the door which she pushed open did not bang as when other hands touched it, but flew round upon its hinges as airy as herself; and when she flung herself upon the bed with a soft cry of “Mother!” the whole place seemed full of her, brightening and growing warm with pleasure. Mrs. Joscelyn turned round with an answering cry, and took happiness into her feeble arms with a shock of sudden consolation that sent the blood into motion again in her veins. She was not happy herself, poor soul! but happiness stood by her bed, and clasped her neck, and breathed into her its soft natural sweetness.

“Oh, my Liddy, my Liddy!” the poor woman said.

Liddy was all in a commotion of gladness to get back; to stop her lessons in mid-career of the "half;" to be of such importance that she was sent for to help and cure her mother. Harry's loss was a very secondary matter to the girl, who had not seen very much of Harry, nor had ever been used to look upon him as a necessary part of home; but she listened to all the story, which her mother found a great relief in telling her from beginning to end, with a childish pleasure in the tale as well as sympathy with the teller.

"Oh, but he'll come back," Liddy said, with a happy confidence, which made far more impression on her mother than all that had been said by people who knew a great deal better than Liddy.

"Do you think so, my darling?" she asked with piteous eyes—as if the child could tell. Joan looking on, and much advantaged herself by the little stir of mind which her resolution to send for Liddy, and the prompt carrying out of the same, had roused within her, could not but laugh once more that sharp laugh of mingled amusement and wonder, to see how efficacious her remedy was.

“Mother’s very queer when all’s done,” she said to herself. She had done everything for everybody throughout all this troubled moment ; but Liddy, who could do nothing save kiss Mrs. Joscelyn’s white face and warm her chilly hands, and promise with confident ignorance, “Oh, but he’ll come back,” was of far greater account than she. But it was a great relief to her mind all the same. And by and by this great event which had disturbed even the rude soul of Ralph Joscelyn, and filled him with shame and angry confusion, began to be a thing they were all used to, and which had entered into the fabric of their lives.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



